

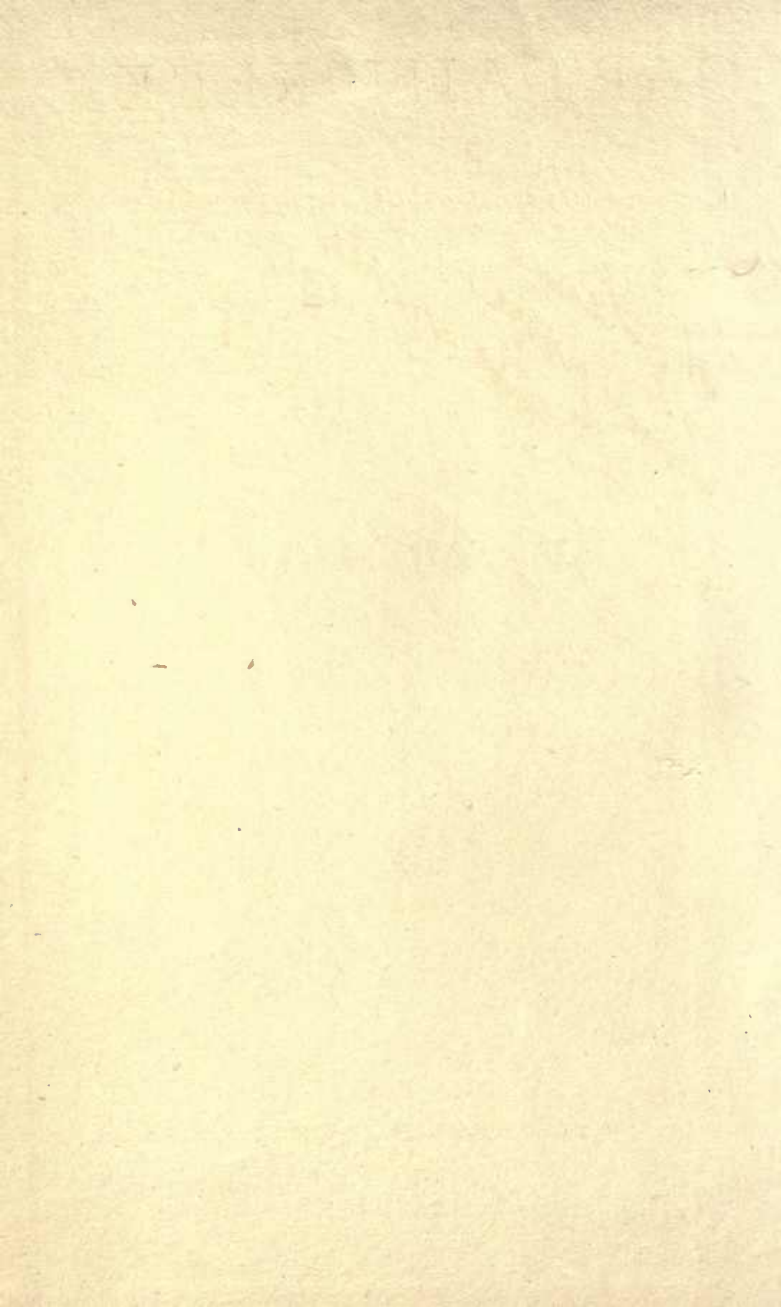
CAPTAIN KLEK

A ROMANCE OF MARSEILLES

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CAPTAIN KLEK

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CAPTAIN KLEK

A ROMANCE OF MARSEILLES

*J. H. Glenn
Lemon Grove,
with author's regards, 1912
W. J. H.*

BY



LONDON

WATTS & CO.

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1911



TO
MY BELOVED PROMPTER
MOLLY

2129122

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CHAPTER I

THE WAY OF THE WIND

"OUR-SINS! OUR-SINS!!" was the loud melancholic cry of a young coster as she squatted, with a well-filled brown cane basket beside her, at the corner of the Rue Sylvabelle in the respectable quarter of the town of Marseilles, on a wintry night some thirty years ago.

"Our-sins!" may read like the initial wail of a doleful jeremiad; but the simple word "*Oursins*" (pronounced "Oorsun") made a very different impression on the mind of the humble *ouvrière* from the absinthe factory opposite the Petite Œuvre¹ who came and held her apron out while the Catalan fish-wife plunged her sharp scissors into the prickly sides of half-a-dozen wet black sea-urchins, and, ripping them open, displayed their fine auriferous linings for the first time to human eyes.

Incessantly, lest it should be thought that her stock-in-trade was exhausted, she continued this pitiful drawling shout, the while exposing a double row of white teeth in her bronzed uplifted face:

"*Our-sins! Our-sins!!*"

Likewise her customer, the *ouvrière*, perceiving my presence and curiosity, playfully joined in the lamentation while furtively glancing, now at the basket of sea fruit, now at me.

Their sins, indeed! As a matter of fact, they

¹ A large institution—convent and factory.

caused these women no more uneasiness than did the handling of those little spherical bundles of projecting needles, thanks to the indulgent dispensations of Holy Mother Church, whose requirements they had both fulfilled that morning at daybreak.

It was during an after-dinner smoking stroll. I had walked up the Rue Paradis, leaving my wife and children at our hotel on the Canebière; and now, seeing and feeling the effects of the cold wind, which was increasing in force, I turned to go back to them. But in so doing I stumbled and fell—losing my balance on the narrow but rather high *trottoir*, which was not wide enough for two persons to pass one another without embracing. A good-natured cabman helped me to regain my feet, and then courteously proffered the use of his vehicle, remarking, somewhat compassionately, that I was not the first person who had been upset that evening—either by the wind, or in consequence of imbibing an antidote to its unsteady effects. I declined his offer with a “*Merci*,” expressed in a way that meant “I would rather not,” and then walked straight away as a practical repudiation of his insinuation.

The Café Glacier, which occupies the corner of the Rue Paradis on the Canebière and faces the Bourse, is a sumptuous specimen of the continental public-house; one of those institutions that are recognised and appreciated by being frequented more than any other place on earth for rest, conversation, business, and refreshment; whereat can be obtained beverages of almost every kind, including the most intoxicating and the most pernicious, but where you will rarely meet with a drunken man and never see a drunken woman.

As I approached the café I heard a noise, long before the cause of it appeared. A table was knocked over during a violent scuffle and amid vociferations between two police agents, a *garçon* in white apron and a respectably dressed man, who kept on exchanging high words with a number of people inside. They shouted "*Allemand!*" and gave vent to their excited feelings.

"But, who are you?" one of the agents demanded gruffly, while gesticulating menaces.

"I am the Captain Otto Klek—a naturalised Frenchman. Here is my card," said the accused, haughtily handing it over the heads of several hustling busybodies. Then followed a general scrimmage and a rush from within as a burly, florid, pudding-faced man, with his vest unbuttoned and without a hat, came forward, ejaculating from his frothy mouth the words, "*Espion! Allemand!*" The exclamation was garnished with scurrilous expletives, the excited interloper shaking his fist over the policeman's shoulder at the object of the general vituperations. The latter individual thereupon suddenly released himself, and, springing a pace backward, drew a large revolver from his breast pocket. The next instant the weapon was knocked out of his grasp, and the two agents were marching their prisoner across the road at the head of a body—and a tail—of witnesses.

The Captain took it calmly, as if he were accustomed to the abuse, and quite indifferent as to what was in store for him. There was a firmness in the look of his face and in his step; while around his mouth and full-red lips, that were compressed yet visible, notwithstanding a well-groomed moustache, the creases of a smile betokened a spirit of bravado.

As he removed his tall silk hat to smooth and adjust it, he rearranged, likewise, the short light curls which crowned a well-formed head and a fair open face. Two or three *gamins* called out "*Au violon!*" and elicited a simultaneous chorus of approving remarks from among the bystanders—and sitters—outside the café.

But for my part, moved as I was by sympathy for the man whose name and features denoted a Teutonic origin, an impulse prompting interference was almost irresistible. "Under what circumstances," I wondered, "did he become a naturalised Frenchman?"

Meantime, the freezing blast whistled loudly among the masts and cords of the shipping in the Old Port, as well as through the telegraph wires and those which were attached to secure the chimney-pots to their respective houses. Every blind was drawn in, and very few shops—other than cafés—remained open.

After the little crowd which had escorted the Captain had passed through some back streets to avoid the open quay, and gone away towards the mairie, I noted the extreme bareness of the streets—with scarcely a passenger—in this most populous city, at the comparatively early hour of nine in the evening. Then, looking upward, I became rapt with admiration of the deep blue sky, just then furnished with a brilliancy and a populousness I had never before dreamed of. Suddenly, with a whiz and a bang, a loose shutter fell from a first-floor window right in front of me. A roaring sound came from behind, then clack! a large piece of white stone and two tiles dropped on to the roadway I had just stepped out of. It was time that I

should turn in. As I did so the female clerk at the bureau remarked :

“ You find it cold ? It is a mistral.”

“ Indeed ? ” said I. “ How long does it generally last ? ”

“ Three, four, five days, perhaps ; then it will bring fine weather, and everybody can go out. It is dangerous to do so at present.”

“ I can quite believe that ; I was nearly killed just now,” said I.

“ Oh, but it is very injurious to one’s health. The mistral means death to delicate people ; it is the chief cause of *fluxion de poitrine*. What is that in English ? ”

“ Inflammation of the lungs,” I replied, and, saying “ Good night, Mademoiselle,” began to mount the stairs, thinking anxiously about my Lucy, for she was weak ; in fact, her ill-health was the principal reason for our coming to the South of France.

We had left London in a dense, cold fog ; and it was an agreeable change now to breathe the pure light air of Marseilles. But what about this mistral—if she should be attacked by its rude blast, and succumb to the foe which we fondly thought we had left in the fogs behind us ?

I was quite dejected ; and must have looked so as I opened the door and saw them all sitting in front of a bright fire, Lucy happy enough with March on her knee. He was a big child for his six years. Nova, who was three years older, was playing halma with Martha, the governess.

“ You do look pale—what is the matter ? Where have you been since dinner ? ” inquired my wife.

“ I am all right, thanks—have been for a digestive

walk. I say, my dear, you must not go out yet; this wind is too bitterly cold. It clears the sky and brings fine weather, but invalids can't stand it. You will promise, won't you, not to stir out of doors until it has passed away?"

"You must interest me with something or other if I am to be a prisoner," she replied. "The view from this window is pretty. I enjoy seeing the movement and comparing the ways of the people in the streets with those of London; they suggest new ideas. For example, to-day there were three animals drawing a huge two-wheeled cart. In the shafts was a horse, in front of him a mule, and in front of the mule a donkey. We expected next to see a dog as leader to a team of four."

The children clapped their hands with joy at the thought, which their father turned to account, saying:

"We will all do our best to help mamma to bear the tedium of the next day or two—won't we?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Nova. "A team of four! We'll pull you through, mamma."

This was the signal for an exuberant kissing demonstration. Then their mother, after reciprocating each loving squeeze, took the opportunity to assure them that it was long past their usual bedtime. Martha accompanied them, and we—husband and wife—before retiring, passed a quiet hour in reviewing our situation.

We congratulated ourselves upon having had our luggage previously labelled "Marseilles," and stopping here on our way to Cannes. The journey of three-and-twenty hours from Paris was vastly too fatiguing. It would have been insupportable but for the interest we took—the children, especially—

in the views of the country and incidents by the way, as well as in the peasantry entering and leaving the trains at the stations, more than a few of whom were quite companionable.

The strength and fitful violence of the great wind-storm were manifestly not to be lightly ignored. During that night it twisted and wrenched from the earth a magnificent tree some seventy feet high and three feet in diameter at the base. I saw it lying prone at the corner of the Boulevard Dugommier in the centre of the city.

The following day I learnt that a man had been blown down on his back and killed as he attempted to cross the Rue Noailles. A cab, too, was blown over into the Port, and its occupants drowned. The tram-cars, owing to the wind, ceased running by the Corniche Road. Everybody out of doors looked nipped and pinched. The florists' kiosques facing the Cours St. Louis were all shut up and abandoned. The Cours itself was deserted by the crowd of unemployed with which it was usually encumbered, and from which the spot derived the name of *Place des Fainéants*. I trotted about, however, having a purpose, and began to consider what I had read and been told about the mistral. Presently I was mounting the Rue Dragon, towards the British Consulate. An individual, enveloped in a thick dark invernness cape, surmounted by a slouched, broad-brimmed, felt hat, stood at the door. I spoke to him in English, and he pointed the way for me.

"You'll find the consul very busy," he said. And so I did. The outer bureau was full of seafaring men, and I had to wait my turn.

In spite of the gouty pain from which he was the

suffering, Her Britannic Majesty's accredited representative allowed me to inform him that I had come over with an invalid wife and a small family with the object of making a long stay; that, unlike the majority of British frequenters of the Riviera, we were not rich; that Marseilles, with its life and animation, appeared to be sufficiently full of attractions for us, and quite far enough away from London, where I had a business that might be conducted by my partner, alone, during my prolonged absence. Why should we not remain here instead of going farther? Is this cold high wind unknown at Cannes or Nice? Does it occur in Marseilles too often to be tolerated by anyone not a native?

The latter of these questions was answered negatively; but the reply to my first, I was told, depended upon our tastes. Fashionable society in Marseilles was confined to the natives. Even the consuls did not habitually exchange visits with the prefect; and, excepting on New Year's Day, it was doubtful if they ever met. The mayor, together with his adjoints, were men of the people, generally radicals of a pronounced type, steeped to the eyes in municipal affairs, and only to be found, when away from their respective posts, in the cafés.

From the point of view of distance from England (which means more or less retarded postal communication), all the more fashionable places beyond suffer by comparison with Marseilles. Commerce, which provides—or is the basis of—interesting occupation for almost all classes excepting the aristocracy, is, in the Riviera, subordinated to expensive pleasures during the season, which lasts less than three months. Out of the season—for six months of the year at least—business and pleasure alike are almost

suspended. Whilst at Marseilles, for nine months of the year, life is enjoyed even (perhaps better) by those who live frugally. The winters are short; and, excepting during the prevalence of the mistral, you may—with a south or south-eastern aspect to your house—dine in the open air every day in the year.

This was reassuring; and I could have sat longer but for fear of trespassing on valuable time; and, seeing others waiting, I duly thanked the consul and withdrew. In doing so I brushed against the man of the inverness cape. We both nodded. The lineaments of his features now reminded me of an old London acquaintance. I stood and waited for him to come out again.

“Why, Mr. Glenn, it must be a generation since we met last!” he exclaimed as we shook hands together. “Are you travelling?”

How glad we both were to have met thus was to be seen in our radiant faces and the heartiness of a second grasp of the hands. After having briefly explained my position, I learnt from him that, since the Metropolitan Railway Company had taken his business premises, he had retired upon the compensation they paid him, and had now been living in Marseilles for more than five years.

Nelson—for that was his name—was the very man I required. He was destined to become my friend again. It did not seem the proper thing to stand and chat in front of a café; and, since we mutually declined an invitation to partake of an *apéritif*, I asked him to come and lunch with us at the hotel. But he excused himself with apologies for his attire, and made another appointment, which I did not fail to keep.

My morning's work made good news for Lucy, with whom I spent the rest of the day reading and arranging our affairs and correspondence. The children, after a very short promenade and a peep at the shops on the north side of the famous thoroughfare, and a mild romp along the corridor (by special permission of the hotel manager), settled down to light lessons in French. These were followed by picture books and stories, or scraps, out of *Monte Cristo* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, as told them by Martha.

She was a good girl, and very fond of our children, to whom she had begun to give French lessons about a month back, when our plan of emigration was first mooted. Her accent was pure, for she had been adopted and brought up by a French lady—Madame Vernet—formerly teacher of miniature painting to the royal Orleanist family, and, like them, a refugee in England. Moreover, Martha was a good-looking girl, with a pair of large bright blue-grey eyes that flashed and lit up her oval countenance when she spoke; which she never did without, at the same time, showing her regular white teeth. Nor were the rest of her features any disgrace to her face, which was remarkable for a clear complexion with a pure rosy tint that heightened naturally, and not like a too self-conscious blush. With a sailor hat poised on a thick coil of chestnut hair, she was as tall as my wife. It was not surprising that people simulated excuses for stopping and regarding them as they passed in the streets, or lowered their heads to escape the fringe, or *lambrequins*, of the sun-blinds which the police regulations permitted shopkeepers to let down to within six feet from the ground.

CHAPTER II

A BACHELOR'S CHOICE

THE rendezvous with my friend Nelson was at a café on the Canebière. While sitting there waiting his arrival I had selected a newspaper from the rack—the *Frankfurter Zeitung*—and was reading the advertisements only, and shirking the difficult though good old German text in which the leading articles are printed, when I noticed that he frowned as he saluted me. Said he :

“ Unless you want that paper particularly, I advise you not to read it here. The national antipathy is very strong yet. The brains of some people are saturated with animosity which takes fire at a low heat and blazes up with demoniacal fury. The managers of the large cafés have been petitioned not to take in the German papers. The smaller places can't afford to risk non-compliance with a threat. You won't find a copy to sell at any of the shops or kiosques.”

“ Is that so ? ” I asked with surprise.

“ A fact, sir. I saw a man grossly insulted the other night at the Café Glacier. He was sitting writing a letter in German; and his neighbour, having rudely glanced over his shoulder at it, could not restrain himself, but remarked aloud to a companion at the same table, ‘ *Voilà un maudit Prussien !* ’ The writer instantly rose and slapped the

man's insolent fat face. There was a row, ending in the incautious correspondent being locked up."

"Will it end there, I wonder?" I remarked, and was about to refer to my having witnessed a part of the identical fracas, when Nelson got up and left me for a few moments. When he returned he said:

"Excuse my absence. I have been outside to inquire of the police-agent standing there. He says that the person we were talking about was released without bail, on parole."

Turning the conversation, we exchanged experiences and views; and the favourable impression received decided me to fix up a home in or near Marseilles.

From the noisy café to the hotel opposite was but a step or two. We crossed the road, I ran up-stairs and fetched my wife, and, the formalities of presentation gone through, we were all soon chatting familiarly over a cheering repast.

An exhilarating sight is a large, lofty, well-appointed continental restaurant, containing, say, a hundred people who have just met for the first time. The case is not infrequent at such railway junction stations as Bâle or Lyons. Alimentation is supposed to be the chief object of everyone; but its attainment is occasionally frustrated by vexatious trifling incidents. Flirtation, the loss of a pair of spectacles or a pocket-handkerchief, or what not, may be the cause of a spoilt appetite. The essential element is lacking if the appetite remains unappeased. Yet the *tout ensemble*, if not satisfying, is satisfactory as a scene of animation, hurry, and bustle that culminates at the ringing of a bell and the announcement of the departing train, when everybody pays, though some "rich are sent empty away."

Our lunch in the splendid *salle à manger* was somewhat marred by similar circumstances. A considerable party of English-speaking tourists had arrived that morning, while many foreigners—*i.e.*, Germans, Scandinavians, Swiss, together with a sprinkling of uniformed French military officers—having gathered at this hotel during the previous few days, all were bent upon embarking that afternoon for the long and interesting Oriental voyage in one of the vessels of the Messageries Maritimes.

The tables were not all uniformly large or small, but some of each sort; so that a family need not be separated, nor a solitary person obliged to sit and hear the intimate conversation of others. Still, privacy was out of the question.

Standing with a delicate-looking young lady—apparently his daughter—at his side was an Anglican bishop, distinguished by his severely clerical garb, including black-gaitered calves. His right hand rested on the back of a chair, as if he were hesitating about saying grace in such a mixed assembly. The soup being already served in three plates, they were suddenly joined by another clergyman, younger and of a lower rank; and thereupon the three took their seats and began to eat and converse like laity. Sitting with her back to us, the daughter's features were undiscernible; yet certain fidgety movements of hers betrayed discomfiture, and she more than once touched her father's arm and essayed in vain to interrupt the conversation, in which she took no part. Not before the entrée had been consumed, together with a bottle of wine, did the bishop attend to her. At the same moment fresh arrivals entered the room—an elderly lady leaning upon the arm of a young, well-groomed curate, both beaming with

the same smile. He advanced, presenting his card and then his mother to the bishop, who rose; while a cordial salutation was being performed between the son of the former and the daughter of the latter. In effect, it was like a scene in the *School for Scandal*.

"What?" "Oh!" "Ah!" "I beg yours," and other ejaculations, resounded; anon, fierce looks were exchanged in rapid turn, as each and all stood up and regarded themselves and one another with amazement; the three divines looking like irate crows, while invectives—"Interloper!" "Personator!" "Scoundrel!" "Impostor!" and such like—escaped their lips.

Then a hasty retreat of the humbler-looking cleric served to explain the tableau to the surrounding groups, who had awoke to the humour of the situation, and we all stared and laughed as at a clever little charade; the moral of which seemed to be: When you have an appointment to be introduced to a person (or a parson), take care to verify his identity ere you invite him to dine.

The conclusion of this amusing and comparatively harmless *entr'acte* became the signal for smokers to light up. Nelson remarked upon the astonishing frequency of such occurrences at Marseilles—more, perhaps, than anywhere else in the world.

The wind had now abated, yet not sufficiently to permit of Lucy's venturing abroad. She approved my plans, however, and before retiring to our apartments appointed me *avant-coureur*, or scout.

We men, having finished our smokes, told the waiter to send for a cab, and admonished him to let it be a clean one. We got it, inasmuch as the fly was smart-looking. But the quality requisite in the

horse I had not specified. Consequently, when the driver heard that we were going to the Boulevard Gazzino, he sighed and looked dubiously from one end of the reins to the other. However, when we reached the foot of the terrifically steep thoroughfare, we alighted and walked (almost climbed) to arrive at the house of the Consular Chaplain.

A courteous greeting was our reward. The British consul's advice to me was confirmed; and, among other pieces of information, we learnt that the total number of British residents in Marseilles at that time scarcely exceeded a hundred.

As we drove away farther into the suburbs, I observed, innocently, to Nelson, that it behoved such a small percentage of Anglo-Saxons, amid some 300,000 of the Latin race, to renounce and forego all caste prejudices and class distinctions, and keep in close touch with one another for social purposes and in case of war scares or political troubles. But my friend shook his head, and replied with a cynical smile :

"As a military tactic 'close formation in defence' may be the correct attitude. But abroad our countrymen—and women especially—are the same as at home. Human nature is not greatly changed by climatic or geographic circumstances. They seem to think that wherever a number—be it small or great—of English people are transplanted, whether as colonists or aliens, off-shoots or cuttings, or slips, they must be an organised body like the parent tree, which preserves due order and rank in its component parts; distinguishing between the sturdy trunk and the showy leaf, the gay blossom and the grimy root. Indispensable though they may be to each other's existence, these different

members must never be seen, or recognised, together at the same time. The hard-working, ever-brown root may ramify out of sight, getting its sustenance as best it can from infiltrations in the soil, below the surface. Let it keep its own place. But the branches that spread out and ostentatiously wave in the free air renew their foliage—change their dress—every season, and must be allowed to enjoy a perfect consciousness of their exalted superiority. Being always in evidence, they monopolise the attention of the upper world, who only too readily go in for show, preferring a battle of flowers rather than the battle of life. Therefore you must be prepared to find at least half-a-dozen grades here among the British. Between the consul sitting behind the royal escutcheon under the Union Jack or Royal Standard and the errand-boy at the Sailors' Home, there could not be a greater gulf fixed than that which divides the *petits gens* from the best society (with a capital B)."

"Excuse me," said I—secretly fearing lest I should be obliged, for my family's sake, to drop his acquaintance later on—"which class do you favour?"

I thought he must have failed to hear my question, because we were being driven noisily up and down stony, narrow, hilly lanes enclosed between high walls, through the gaps in which one caught bewildering glimpses of rippling blue water in the gulf below.

Presently we left the church of Notre Dame de la Garde, with its wonderful hollow-headed statue of the Madonna surmounting as if about to fall upon and crush us, and at a steep spot our driver got down off his seat to help the diminutive old horse to scramble up to a diminutive old house. Nelson unlocked the

door, and we passed into his home. It was a flat-roofed, single-storied, oblong structure, strong enough, to judge by the massive corner-stones and those which formed the doorway. The walls of the square hall were garnished with fishing rods and tackle, while a rifle suspended from a pair of antlers showed that the occupant was a disciple of Nimrod as well as of Isaak Walton. On the right was the principal room, which extended across the depth of the building from front to back, and was lit by one large double window opening to the ground on to a piece of unoccupied land facing south. An uninterrupted view of the sea and islands of the bay burst upon me as Nelson opened the shutters and indicated the various points visible, and the destination of a large steam vessel that was passing within half-a-mile of us, the scene on deck being as distinguishable as if we were on board. I was quite enraptured, and exclaimed :

“ What a lovely panorama ! Where are we ? ”

“ At Endoume,” he replied. “ You are not the first person to feel enchanted by its beauty. Léon Gambetta dined at the ‘ Roubion ’ restaurant down there the other night ; and with his single eye he took such an impression of the scene by moonlight that it was telegraphed to the Paris papers as ‘ the finest view in Europe.’ ”

“ It would seem to be no exaggeration. But neither he nor I have seen the whole of Europe. And then, again, he had been dining,” I suggested ; and, turning away from the dazzling picture, I remarked with admiration, while scanning the apartment :

“ You have a delectable place here, and can well afford to dispense with the amenities of society.”

"But I need not do so," he replied, adding: "You asked me just now which class I favoured. Let me introduce you to my friends."

So saying, he pointed to his books shelved on the long wall facing the door and on both sides of a grand old oak buffet. Carlyle, Darwin, and Silvio Pellico looked seriously down at me. Cheek by jowl against a sixteenth edition of Burton's *Anatomy* stood Mark Twain. Then came *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede*. *Don Quixote* separated two volumes of Livingstone's *Last Journals*; and Byron was propped up with John Bunyan. A row of volumes bore Shakespeare's name, and another that of Walter Scott.

"Ah, I see," said I, "you frequent the best society, and no mistake; that is proved by these well-worn covers."

"Yes," he replied, with a broad smile that partook of the sunlight itself as he stood in its rays, "they have worn well. To me they are better than new, and remain 'un-cut,' for I always find them 'at home.' They never snub me, or scan my exterior as if I had asked for a loan; nor do they change their faces and opinions, nor talk horsey, golfy, or yachty slang in order to expose my ignorance and to please a more fashionable set."

"I do admire your philosophy, and reckon there are thousands who would imitate your example, if they could afford it," was my remark.

"My dear sir, I never lived so cheaply and so well in all my life before," he declared as he handed me a chair and took a seat himself. "As a bachelor in London, I spent four times as much as I do here, and for a fourth of the comforts I now enjoy; among which I esteem most the bright, pure climate and

the shortness of the winter. The economy of the plan is more real than apparent; for while the actual prices of things—the necessities of life, in the way of food and clothing—are higher, they go farther and wear longer. Besides, as it is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' There are so many other things—trifles we call them—indispensable to a comfortable existence in a fashionable city, which are quite unnecessary where a paucity of acquaintances means a total lack of bores. It may be worth while to test the number and sincerity of your friends by passing them through a double sifting process. Exclude those who are so much better off than yourself—in either money or talent, or both—as to be almost inaccessible; and let the rest—the mean and worthless ones—go under."

"*Et après ?*" I inquired ; for he seemed to stop short—thinking.

"*Après !*" he repeated, picking up the thread of our conversation. "Thank God if you have one left." And he clapped me on the shoulder.

Then we rose, and he showed me over the rest of his "bastide," as he called it—a bedroom with distempered walls, and a prim little kitchen—the duties of which, he said, were faithfully performed by an old *femme de ménage* who came regularly upon seeing him go out. All the floors were tiled and red, and bare, excepting for a sheep-skin *descente-lit*, a wolf-skin hearth-rug, and a rush door-mat. Before leaving I tasted his coffee, which was ready prepared in a pretty covered vessel. He turned it into a tiny, bright copper pot, and heated it over a crumpled newspaper, which he lit on a plate. The concoction was black, fragrant, and refreshing—such as we rarely meet with at home;

although, strange to say, the best coffee first passes through the London market before it finds its way to the Continent.

Ten minutes later I was rolling back into town, alone; but the charm of my companion's personality continued for a while like a palpable presence at my side.

I had occasion to grumble at the *cocher* for his unremitting use of the whip, which he deferentially laid aside for a short time, but plied with renewed vigour and harsher cruelty towards the end of the course.

"He is old, you know," the man answered in French, as if it did not matter whether he or the knacker killed the poor animal. But when, upon our alighting, he begged me to remember his *pour-boire*, and to make it larger because of his extra exertions over beating the horse, I had him on the hip, and retorted, with a reason for declining to pay him a sou more than the fare :

"You are old, you know."

Straight though I looked him in the face, not the smallest signs of repentance were perceptible; and he smacked his whip with a devil-may-care "*Tant pis !*" and drove off.

The cutting wind and disagreeable sandy dust having subsided, Lucy's release was rendered permissible, and house-hunting a practicable and even an enjoyable occupation.

CHAPTER III

THE UBIQUITOUS COMMERCIAL

UNTIL the spring we lived quietly in apartments overlooking the Place Castellane. Meantime we took a few little trips to the environs—Les Aygalades and half-a-dozen other places named after saints more or less obscure—accepting, gratefully, advice gratis from all directions. I should be wrong in saying that nothing important transpired, because there was a steady improvement in my wife's health, her bronchial ailment having totally vanished, and that without recourse to doctors. In fact, medicine cost us less than five francs during the first year of our residence in Marseilles.

Under a false notion of etiquette, we had refrained from paying calls on the English residents—expecting to be first visited by them—until we discovered the inconsistency of the sticklers for class distinction *à l'anglaise* abroad, who rigidly observe the French custom of ignoring the presence of newcomers unless the latter take the trouble to introduce themselves formally, ceremoniously. And we found also that some of the patriotic sort who displayed union-jacks on *fête* days encouraged their servants in the effrontery of denying—lying—"Not at home." Others assumed the importance of government officials in their third-floor flats, and discouraged flying visitors by shutting the door in their faces with: "If you want to see madam, you must call

on such a day at three o'clock; on other days she does not receive." But the chaplain did not overlook us; neither did the clerks at the British Consulate omit to recommend to our benevolence sundry tramps needing everything, but not wanting to work.

One afternoon our servant announced "*Un monsieur*," who sent in two cards, one of which bore the name of the consular chaplain, the other that of "Capitaine Otto Klek," whom I received in the *salon*. He bowed profoundly and spoke in English, very well but not perfectly.

"Have I the honour to address Mr. Glenn?"

"That is my name. Take a seat, Captain Klek."

"With your permission," he said. "I was informed that you had relations at London in the arms and ammunition profession."

"That is so," I replied; adding, "I recollect having mentioned the fact to the chaplain; and I suppose that accounts for his card."

"Precisely, sir," said the Captain; "and if you will allow me, I will explain the object of my troubling you. It is to inquire whether your friends would like to open up a business in Morocco; because I go shortly to re-visit that country, where I am well known."

I was taking stock of the man whom I had last seen in custody of the police. The natural dignity of his style impressed me more now than then. It was with diffidence that I put the question:

"Are you a commercial traveller, then?"

To which he promptly answered with a complacent candour, throwing himself back in the chair and regarding me full face:

"I like to tell you frankly, sir, since you are an Englishman;—and I have always found your compatriots *carrés*, as we say,—I have a mission of a character *quasi-politique* which will bring me close connexions among Arab chiefs. I speak their tongue; and of the rest, before I cross from Gibraltar to Tangier, I am so changed of my apparel and manners, and religion, you would believe me to be a Mussulman. Therefore, I can secure confidence and some good orders."

"That is clever," I exclaimed, with an approving laugh. "No wonder that the ordinary British representative who sticks to his Cockney dress and hires an interpreter—often a German who transmits information of all business transactions to his fatherland—fails as a foreign commercial traveller; his squareness unfits him for round holes; and circumambulation is incompatible with his boasted straightforwardness. It is very odd that the commercial interests of such a proud, rich nation as ours should be entrusted to foreign representatives; but so it is."

"We take it as a compliment," interposed the Captain.

"To which you are quite welcome," said I; "but I doubt whether it is intended as one. I have often deplored the apathy with which our manufacturers treat the question in all its bearings. Why, when I was a junior in one of our largest wholesale houses, a 'foreign,' or 'export' order was generally regarded as an opportunity for pushing off old stock—once shipped, out of mind; or else the order was kept back for translation, or what not, while every other line was being executed for town and country trade first. An errand boy at the

counter would be served in five minutes; while a carefully written indent from abroad remained on the governor's desk like a picture only to be admired. In the packing department we only studied our own convenience as to size and weight of cases, and never that of the agents into whose hands the goods might pass in course of transit."

"That is one of the most serious complaints," remarked the Captain.

"Ah!" I sighed, "and have you noticed any others?"

"Yes,—that your people do not take the trouble to read up the customs regulations, or translate correctly the money weights and measures, but leave these operations to be performed by the consignee. The consequence is that until you shall hear from him to say that the goods are actually in his possession you are not safe in drawing your bill. One day England will grow wiser," he concluded.

"When it's too late," I added with ill-concealed irritation that was not dispersed for a little moment; during which I resolved, determinedly, that my son should be taught, not only to act his part well on life's stage, but that the making-up is indispensable to complete success.

"Well, Captain Klek, I will write to my people; and if you will call again in a few days, I shall be pleased to let you have the answer. How soon do you start?"

"There is a Pâquet Company's boat leaving next Monday week—that will be in ten days' time; but I can wait another if necessary," he replied, taking his pocket-book out and making a note.

I was thinking just then that I ought to have some more references, and he must have perceived

the cause of my hesitation, for he began to select from among his papers.

"Pardon me," said I; "how did you get out of that affair the other night at the Café Glacier?"

He gave a short laugh and replied:

"I was set free the moment the *commissaire* saw me, for he is a friend of mine; we fought side by side against the Prussians. He made pretence in presence of the two *agents de police* and asked for my papers, which he returned at once; my revolver, too, he himself gave me back the next morning. But my foe—the man who insulted me—did not come and accuse me for the slap I gave him, for one very good reason: he was a coward. Our accounts must be settled one of those days after I return from Maroc."

"But the enemy,—will he wait?" I inquired with astonishment.

"He cannot do else," he continued, "because the police captured him for a *faussaire*, and he will have six months of prison himself. May I ask you to do me the favour to call upon the *commissaire de police*?—here is his card—and he will *renseigner* you of me."

At this juncture Lucy entered, and Captain Klek instantly rose, put his heels together, and made a profound bow in salutation. While introducing him to her I could not but admire his form and perfect manner.

As we did not attempt to re-seat ourselves, he would have taken his leave at once; but the door opened, and the children, returning from a walk on the Prado, came in to be kissed. I said:

"You must not mind this interruption, Captain Klek; perhaps you are a father yourself?"

"I say, No," was his reply; and he shook his head slightly and smiled.

Following and accompanying the children was Martha, who, as soon as she perceived that we were engaged, strove to withdraw. But my wife prevented her, while the Captain turned and made her another of his obsequious bows. Half a minute more and he was gone. During that brief space I noticed the flash of a strong current—as subtle as electricity, if not as killing—pass between their four expressive eyes. Both pairs were of that penetrating steel-blue greyish colour, and diamond bright; although hers were the more lustrous.

"What a handsome man!" my wife remarked as we went in to tea, and I could not contradict her.

I lost no time in writing to London about the Captain's offer; and the next day I went to see the *commissaire*, whose testimony and recommendation were conclusive. I thought it my duty, nevertheless, to call on the chaplain also. That gentleman being temporarily absent, I saw his *locum tenens*—the Rev. —, equally licensed by the Bishop of Gibraltar—who stated that missionaries and others of his acquaintance in North Africa had mentioned the name of Captain Klek as that of an intrepid and genial officer who, on account of tact and linguistic accomplishment, had been entrusted by the French Government with negotiations of a delicate nature affecting the tribes on the Algerian frontier.

CHAPTER IV

EXPERIENCE TEACHES

EVERYTHING was ready when Captain Klek paid us his second call—the terms of his engagement having been agreed upon and stipulated in a letter which I handed to him, together with catalogues and prices of the implements and articles he was to sell, the patterns of which were to be shipped direct from London to Mogador. The whole afternoon of that day was spent on business, and in the evening he joined us at dinner.

In anticipation of the occasion, we had driven—Lucy and I—up to Endoume and invited Nelson; who had to be fetched from a rocky little promontory on which he was perched, fishing, some two hundred feet below his bungalow. That was two days before the dinner party, and we now began to doubt whether he would turn up, as his promise was conditional upon its being a fine night. The weather, too, was doubtful. However, he came, and so we were spared the pain of inflicting upon him the *sobriquet* of “Diogenes,” which he himself had adopted. Only a martyred saint can bear to be taken at his own estimation.

Both the men now before us were tall and noble-looking. Nelson was rather stiffly built for a hermit. His grey hairs gave him a seniority of twenty years, but did not detract from the vigorous and mobile expression of his features, upon which benevolence

sat permanently, while curiosity and humour played furtively. Anger was seldom at home there, nor yet "the loud laugh which speaks a vacant mind." Contemplating the equanimity of his apparent achievement of that *terra firma* to which we look forward and yearn, as we rock, or dance, o'er the waves on the ocean of life, one coveted his years.

Captain Klek's temperament and disposition were, perhaps, less easily discernible. Even allowing for the difference in years, one could see at a glance that he would never attain philosophic eminence. But what sort of contrary winds or tides would prevent his reaching the haven, his countenance failed to indicate. For the traces of discretion were lacking. Of alertness and chivalry there was enough to inspire impetuous courage, *élan*, into a regiment. Good points these in a military captain; but in a *capitaine au long cours*, as the French style a ship's master, such Quixotic qualities may be relegated to the chest containing his gold-braided uniform. In the choice of a captain, it makes a difference whether we regard life as a battle or a voyage.

The bachelors having been introduced to one another as such, the Captain escorted my wife to the table, and Nelson took Martha. I followed with Nova, the mention of whose name gave rise to a little discussion of interest to foreigners who might become parents while in France.

I explain that the name "Nova" was coined from November, in which month our firstborn arrived, and that it was a settled notion between us so to name all our children, as far as practicable. Thus, our other child was called "March."

The Captain declared he liked the idea.

“And why not?” he asked. “You have a Princess May, besides hosts of Julias and Augustas. ‘Septimus’ and ‘Octavius’ are the names of two brothers, eminent merchants of London; the former a most accomplished gentleman whom I met at Constantinople. I heard an American lady call her little girl ‘Junie’ here on the Canebière the other day.”

“The lunar calendar is a much less common code than that which the Bible affords,” remarked Nelson, “but the former is limited to a round dozen of names. And even supposing each birth to take place in a different month, you would never call a boy who might be born in January ‘Janus’—would you?”

We were amused at the suggestion. My wife answered:

“I certainly should draw the line at ‘April,’ for fear my child should be nicknamed ‘Ape.’”

“Do you know,” inquired the Captain, “that in France a child cannot be registered at the mairies under any name the parents may choose, unless it is to be found in the prescribed list which was compiled eighty years ago?”

We were none of us aware of the fact. Nelson observed:

“But that must be one of the many laws which the authorities neglect to enforce—in the case of foreigners or aliens, at any rate. The consuls’ books will prove this.”

“Ah, the consuls!” ejaculated the Captain, “they do very much as they like—each one is a despot in his way. At some places I have lived in they not only register births and deaths, but marry and divorce, as they please. It is woe to anybody who shall protest.”

“What about the British chaplains or clergymen,—are they in league with the consuls? Do you mean to say the Church allows it?” my wife asked. Upon which Nelson remarked:

“The relations between those two representatives of our nation are frequently strained, if not antagonistic.”

“Surely they are not above or beyond the laws of their country,” I submitted.

“But they undermine them like a community of rats. They are a law unto themselves,” replied the Captain, with emphasis.

“What further harm can they do?” inquired Martha. It was her first remark across the table; and she blushed as the Captain’s eyes darted over towards her. He seemed to be suddenly struck, as he gazed momentarily, not at her face, but at a little amethyst brooch that she was wearing. Then, checking himself, he regarded her squarely as he replied to her question:

“A consul may assault any of his own people, and he cannot be tried before anyone but himself. They can make a person’s life intolerable. I will give you an instance. In a seaport town of 1,500 inhabitants, and with as many as eight consuls, one of them was offended with a missionary who in his sermons had alluded to and deprecated certain immorality which, out of sheer partiality, went unpunished. For this the missionary was ostracised by the British consul and his immediate friends. And their discourtesy was manifested so openly that the natives did not hesitate to insult and throw stones at the missionary, even attacking his house and brutally ill-using his servants and the converts attending his ministry. Finally, he was driven to

leave his post; and, in order to obtain protection for his wife and to secure his (and her) private property, which was considerable, he was compelled to change his nationality."

"Was he an Englishman?" my wife demanded eagerly. The Captain replied:

"I do not know. But he had been a clergyman of your Church of England for twenty-five years."

"Disgraceful!" was the general chorus.

"And what is he now?" asked Martha.

"A naturalised French subject," was the response. "This government made him a present of his papers, because he was an influential man and likely to be of use to us."

"Your information must be fresh," said Nelson. "I know the gentleman you refer to; he was recently in this city, and gave me a very touching account of his experiences. He also related that, having been robbed by a servant, he preferred a charge before the consul. Said that functionary: 'Surely, Mr. G——, your religion teaches you to forgive; forgive the man.' To which the missionary replied: 'I do not require to be reminded of my duty, Mr. Consul; but yours is plain enough: it is to administer justice. That is what I come here for. My clemency is discretionary.' 'Then,' said the consul, rising from his seat, 'judgment will be postponed.' And, of course, no more was done in the matter."

"It is the never-dying struggle for supremacy between the authorities temporal and spiritual. The former have got the upper hand, and mean to keep it. You may see a British Consul reading the lessons, or hear him preach a homily in church; but he will never, *per contra*, let the parson perform the sacred duties of the consulate. The distinction

between Church and State must be maintained, even in the smallest community, abroad as well as at home."

"There's no doubt," said I, "that justice is as rarely to be met with at British as at any other nation's consulates. Read what Sir Richard Burton has written on the subject; he reckons them up in no measured terms."

The Captain rejoined:

"You have an English historian with a French name—Dr. Lemprière—who declares that in Mexico and all along the Pacific coast the British consuls were notorious for many infamous transactions. It was the case when I was there in '66."

"We should all like to hear some account of the Captain's exploits in that part of the world, I feel sure," said Martha, with an appealing glance towards him. To which he replied modestly, without raising his eyes:

"That is not much, for I was only one of sixty-three thousand soldiers then under Maréchal Bazaine."

"But you told me you were deputed to carry a special message from Napoleon to the Emperor Maximilian," interposed Lucy.

"Ah, yes!" he added pathetically. "From the splendour of the Tuileries to the dungeon of Quere-taro. I was in Maximilian's retinue there, and a prisoner with him at the last. He, like Christ Himself, pleaded for the liberty of those who accompanied him, while freely giving up his own life for their cause. The circumstances are too sad for this occasion. Some other time, perhaps——"

We acquiesced, for it was becoming melancholy. But I could not refrain from adding:

“ Maximilian the Austrian’s death was that of a true martyr ; while the crowning act of his betrayer, Bazaine—the surrender of Sedan—stigmatises him a coward. That man lives yet. How inscrutable are the ways of—governments ! ”

Dessert was being served when Nelson, addressing our little daughter, said, with a smile :

“ Well, Miss Nova, your name signifies ‘ new.’ Will you tell us what you have found new, or strange, since you have been in Marseilles ? ”

The child, taken by surprise, was at a loss how to begin. At length she ventured timidly :

“ There are so many things I find strange ; one is—puddings.”

“ Puddings ! Why, they are an institution of Old England. Have you seen or tasted any here ? ” he asked with an incredulous air.

“ Yes, every day when we were staying at the hotel,” replied Nova, looking towards her mother for confirmation. “ The puddings were all exactly alike ; but called by different names—Sunday pudding, Monday pudding, and so on right through the week.”

This curious fact, the relation of which caused hilarity, I accounted for by suggesting the probability that the chef had only one recipe for a *pouding à l’anglaise* ; but being desirous of pleasing us, he had cooked it every day, and waggishly imitated our example by utilising the calendar for a name.

“ What’s in a name ? The pudding is the same,” cried Nelson. “ Any more novelties, Nova ? ”

The child resumed with confidence :

“ The bakers’ shops are painted the colour of their bread, and the butchers’ shops are all red outside. It is not artistic. At least Martha says so.”

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed the examiner ; “ you must be a rising artist. But let me tell you that the tradespeople use colours as signs for those who cannot read ; and there are still many such people in this country, especially among the Italians. Moreover, you will have remarked that some of the shops are distinguished by objects typical of their industry. Pork-butchers expose a metal pig ; the barber, a shaving-dish ; the dentist, an enormous tooth ; the dyer, a quantity of red bunting ; and so on. What else did you observe ? ”

Thus encouraged, she kept on :

“ The school-children wear black pinafores ; and some have their copybooks pinned flat open on their backs, while others take *chauffrettes* with them to warm their feet in school. Mother thinks they can't be healthy. They are dangerous too. We saw a child fall with one ; and the hot ashes were scattered about—it was a wonder he was not burnt.”

“ I can't bear those things in the house, with their charcoal fumes,” said my wife ; and there was a consensus of opinion on that point.

Other topics engaged us until dinner was concluded—much to the satisfaction of Lucy, who had managed to get six courses, well cooked and served, with only one extra help in the kitchen.

We men sat and smoked ; and I took the opportunity to draw the Captain out in order to satisfy my curiosity as to what induced him to become a Frenchman. Briefly epitomised, this was his story :—

An Austrian by birth, he was brought up for military or diplomatic service—his father possessing property and influence. As a dispatch-bearer, he

first came to Paris in 1866, and was received by Napoleon himself, under circumstances connected with the war in Mexico. The perilous position, there, of the Archduke Maximilian—for which the French Emperor was solely responsible—caused the greatest anxiety among the Austrian imperial family. In the young subaltern before him Louis Napoleon thought he had a useful coadjutor, and offered him the post of special envoy, if he would go out at once to Mexico. In less than an hour Otto Klek decided. His father had but recently been killed, and the rest of his family and people were in great distress through the calamity of the Seven Days' War. The Mexican campaign proving abortive, two years after, with as many wounds to boot, Captain Klek was back in Paris, where he was offered a situation in the bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—conditionally upon his becoming a naturalised French subject. At the outbreak of hostilities between France and Prussia he was not in a fit condition to re-enter active service. But later on he volunteered to accompany Garibaldi in his Forlorn Hope campaign, and joined the unfortunate Army of the Loire. The result was more wounds; one upon the temple, which the Captain showed us had been badly cicatrised by grafting upon it a piece of fowl's flesh. The Declaration of Peace and the frequent changes of government that ensued had the effect of keeping the volunteer out of employment as a military attaché at the Foreign Office, and he was easily induced to espouse the cause of a pretender to the sultanate of Morocco. For this purpose and object the Captain went to London and bought a shipload of Birmingham rifles and a quantity of cartridges. Thence he

proceeded, alone, back through France and Spain to Gibraltar, where, under cover of a dark night, he took a small boat and crossed over to Tangier. The filibustering enterprise was frustrated, however, for he was taken prisoner before he had landed; and thereupon he learnt that his master—the Sultan's brother—had been caught and put to death. For months Captain Klek remained in the prison immediately attached to the palace of Bargash the Grand Pacha, until one day, his chief cook being taken suddenly ill, the prisoner was fetched in—as he was known to possess a few boxes of pills! A salutary and rapid cure established the new doctor's reputation; and he was not slow to take advantage of an indulgence, for upon the very first chance he made his escape. After many days of adventure—during which our friend acquired such familiarity with the tribesmen that he passed as a true Mussulman—he found his way back through Algeria to France.

Though modestly told and shorn of details, it was a pretty as well as an exciting bit of history, for which the Captain deserved the sympathetic applause we accorded him. Upon its conclusion we put out our cigars, tasted a liqueur or drank up our coffee, and then withdrew to the *salon*. There the Captain drifted—as if naturally—towards Martha; and they both conversed animatedly together, in German as well as French.

Nelson, who discovered a bass voice, sang a capital old song about gay cavaliers putting roundheads down; and my Lucy showed that she had not forgotten the pleasing art the performance of which was the means of bringing us for the first time together. It was at a Penny Reading in Mayfair.

I turned over the music for her at the piano when she played "The Lost Chord." But the chord she struck was never lost; and both then and now it was altogether a very pleasant and memorable evening.

CHAPTER V

RIPER VIEWS

THE many and various grades of the cosmopolitan, floating population of Marseilles are well provided with hotels. In those like the "Grand Louvre" the *ascenseur* saves one the trouble of mounting the stairs; in the "Petit Voyageur" there are no stairs to mount, and only a few to descend. The latter hotel publishes a prospectus and tariff that might compete with that of the Salvation Army. On the back of the precious handbill are the addresses of *Etablissements Analogues* in a hundred other towns of France whereat one may bring his own food and eat it at ease without being molested by obsequious and redundant waiters. For the rest of its inhabitants, industrial and professional, the city is accommodating enough; and the sanitary arrangements, which were defective in the 'eighties, are fairly good to-day.

For ourselves, we preferred the elevated suburban districts. A dozen good rooms, compactly enclosed within solid thick walls with plenty of stone in them, a large garden, and views of the sea and country: these advantages, combined with an easy and short route to the centre of the town, were sought, and were found; not at Endoume, however, but in the opposite direction—St. Barnabé.

True, the sea was distant—three or four miles—and the picturesque, open country, which was no

nearer, began with the cemetery and stretched across over La Pomme towards Aubagne, until the enchantment was crowned by a mountain line whose configuration resembled a brooding giant, recumbent, masculine form ; the head of which was particularly human-like, and which the natives called *La Tête de Pierre Puget*. Such a stupendous natural memorial—destined to survive every kind of mundane revolution or convulsion excepting earthquakes—is worthy the genius of that eminently gifted artist who, as painter, sculptor, and architect, adorned both France and Italy, but more especially Marseilles, the place of his birth—and death.

Before the very hot weather set in we took a drive to the village of Cassis, and picnicked out in a rocky cove near to the little port. We all went—filling a pair-horse carriage; and Nelson, too, joined us at the “Rond Point” of the Prado, which spot we passed at eight o’clock in the morning. By nine we were resting at that favourite place to ruralise, or *faire la noce*—La Panouse—a Swiss-like valley opening out to the sea at Madrague. Few localities between this and Grasse can excel it in beauty. After leaving its charming precincts a few minutes behind us, we alighted again to inspect a lime-kiln that had only recently been the scene of three noble examples of self-sacrifice on the part of some simple Italian workmen. The facts were as follows:—

Upon seeing one of their comrades drop into the pit and suddenly become asphyxiated by its noxious fumes, they jumped in to his rescue. First one, who was instantly overcome and disabled; then a second, and a third—each in his turn fearless, and hopeful of better success than his predecessor, and regardless of his own chance of escape, until they

all four lay dead; and that within a few minutes, and fewer inches of separation from each other.

We recounted the details of this magnanimous act, exemplifying that love—than which no man hath greater—when “a man layeth down his life for his friends”—as we had read them in the local journals. And we all commenced to look around for some token—a cross or other monument. But no; there was nothing to mark the departure of these insignificant units of a country’s surplus population, or to commemorate the acts of those apostles of true Christianity who knew no better, but left this world *sans ceremonie*, to enter the next *en fête*.

Nor were there any people about—not a soul beside ourselves; unless the moulting fowl which stood watching us meditatively possessed a spark of that divine essence. Who knows?

So we rolled away, resolving to write to the editors of one or two of the five daily papers that circulated in the adjacent city, and advertised many less noteworthy occurrences, while the names and deeds of these heroes remained “unhonoured and unsung.” Nelson promised to carry out our resolution.

At the foot of the low mountain of Vaufrège he and I got down to walk while the carriage climbed the encircling Corniche Route. We two struck a direct but very steep and stony gully path across to join the rest of the party on the other side. I remember sitting with my friend on the summit near a narrow footway marked on the ordnance map as a goat-track four hundred years old. The carriage—looking like a toy—stood in the distant roadway below, and waited there while we rested. The air was rare and sublimely still. Not a speck was visible in the sky or atmosphere; nor did the least

sound—whether of bird, or insect, or other creature, animate or inanimate—reach us from either direction for miles round. It was deaf man's holiday, and less disturbed than at Craigenputtock, where Carlyle heard sheep munching in a field half-a-mile away. Up here the earth was void and bare of tree or shrub, or a single blade of grass! Only a sparse scrubby little crop of wild thyme—the colour of the loose grey volcanic soil itself, and therefore hardly discernible—garnished the otherwise totally barren rocky surface. It was scarcely conceivable that this meagre herb should be the sole sustenance of a large flock of goats that we saw farther off, huddled around a wretched-looking farmhouse or shelter. They must have found their way into nooks secluded and inaccessible to the human eye and feet, or wandered many miles far and wide in order to cull a nibbling and allow time for vegetable Nature to recuperate herself.

The solitude of our surroundings prompted speech. The feeling was irresistible—akin to the suggestion which comes to an Irishman in a row, causing him to knock off every other man's hat.

We had pulled hard, and quietly exhausted our breath in mounting; and now that our lungs were replenished we needs must talk.

Looking backwards towards the west, we realised the words of Charles Dickens, who wrote: "The City of Marseilles lay in the Sun." And, in answer to one or two questions, my companion favoured me with this summary as the result of his observations:—

Its commerce is said to be 3,000 years old. Certainly, its foundation dates from before Christ 600 years. By the Greeks called Massalia and by the

Romans Massilia, it existed as a republic for nearly sixteen centuries. Although the ancient history of Marseilles is full of interest few, if any, monuments of its former grandeur remain to remind us of those periods which historical students like Alexander Dumas allude to as of—"the Ionian city, the contemporary of Tyre and Sidon, full of perfumes from the temple of Diana and her festivals, full of emotions from the narratives of Pythias. Marseilles the Roman city; friendly to Pompey, inimical to Cæsar; all feverish from the civil wars and all proud of the place which Lucain has given it. Marseilles the Gothic parish with its saints and its bishops; with the shaven heads of its monks and the chapleted brows of its consuls; Marseilles the daughter of the Phocéans, the rival of Athens and the sister of Rome." And so forth.

Excepting for the sinister event of the great plague in 1721, by which Marseilles lost between fifty and sixty thousands of its population, scarcely anything notable is recorded to interest foreigners like us.

Although some few distinguished persons were doubtless associated by birth or residence with the locality: Pierre Puget the sculptor, Madame de Sévigné, Monsieur Thiers, who became president in '71, and others. But the *renaissance* of Marseilles dates from the conquest of Algeria. The vigour of its *rajeunissement* is within the memory of living men, and at least one living woman—the lonely widow of Napoleon III.

The extent of his influence upon the commercial expansion of his country it were difficult to over-estimate.

Among the many noble, if ambitious, projects that

France realised during the twenty years' reign of that monarch, the Haussmannising of Paris and the simultaneous aggrandisement and development of other towns and cities—notably Marseilles—have to be reckoned; these, taken in conjunction with the adoption of Free Trade principles, are the works with which his name should be honourably associated. Instead of which, it is generally coupled with allusions to the treacherous and treasonable act of the *Coup d'Etat* and the disaster of Sedan, ignoring the expiation of an ignominious banishment, followed as it was by an accelerated death.

The fact I desire to emphasise is that Marseilles owes pretty well all its public architectural embellishments and many of its distinctive features to the husband and wife who devoted their lives to benefit an ungrateful people. The longest, if not the finest, street Marseilles possesses, the supremely grand cathedral, the imposing sanctuary of Notre Dame de la Garde, the statue of Belsunce, the indispensable hospital, "Hôtel Dieu," the Bourse, the palaces of the Préfecture and the Law Courts; the Cemetery of St. Pierre, the docks of "La Joliette," the Corniche Route, and the universally admired Grand Waterworks terminating with the Long-champs and its Zoological Gardens. Add, the formation of the famous shipping company, now called the Messageries Maritimes, and many other commercial enterprises to the sum of his achievements, and I think you will agree with me that this mere enumeration is conclusive proof of an unexampled, energetic imperialism rightly directed and issuing in a bloodless victory. I may be mistaken in attempting to restore the laurels that were wont to adorn the brow of that man Napoleon III; but

merit deserves recognition wherever it is to be found —“ Give the devil his due.”

It was from Marseilles that the Empress Eugénie took ship *en route* to open the Suez Canal. That occasion was a glorious one befitting the popular taste. In return for Imperial favours the City built their sovereigns that handsome maritime palace you see at the entrance of the port. Unfortunately for all parties, this was never taken possession of for residence; and the Emperor—the municipal authorities approving—made the palace, now known as Le Pharo, a present to his wife.¹

The topic was changed as we turned our faces eastward, and Nelson said :

“ Martha is a fine young woman, and I suppose worthy, or else your wife would not make a companion of her.”

“ Yes,” I replied, “ we have cause to be very thankful that Madame Vernet, when she gave up the stall she had at the Crystal Palace, brought the girl to us and proposed her for governess to our children. By the way, you ought to recollect Madame Vernet ; your firm must have supplied her, as mine did.”

“ To be sure I do,” responded Nelson after a moment’s reflection ; “ and I recollect that she always paid her account promptly. Is she alive and well ? ”

“ No, she died last year, suddenly depriving Martha of her best friend on earth,” I replied.

¹ The sequel is well known. Thirty years later, an almost interminable law-suit was brought to a close. The citizens of another generation had contested the claim of the Empress Eugénie to the structure in question. But she eventually gained the verdict; and thereupon, with characteristic generosity, the whole property was handed over to the municipality as a gift for charitable purposes.

"They were related, then?" he inquired.

"Yes, by adoption," said I. "In a year's time she will inherit, provided she remains an orphan; that is to say, unclaimed by her legitimate parents. Nobody but the lawyers know yet how much she will receive. There are certain other conditions too, about her marrying."

"Forbidding it," he suggested.

"No, on the contrary," I rejoined. "Madame Vernet herself was never married. She told Lucy, once, that she had postponed marriage until too late. Meantime the man she loved married, buried his first wife, and got another. The only hope left for Madame Vernet was to outlive his second wife; but this she failed to do. We are seriously concerned at the bare prospect of losing Martha's services. And I feel a certain amount of responsibility, inasmuch as we stand, morally, in the relation of guardians to the girl, who has received a careful training, is of an amiable disposition, yet exhibits, now and again, a remarkable force of character."

"You are afraid she will be getting engaged?" he asked.

"Just so," I replied. "Ought we to try and prevent her?"

"That depends," said my friend thoughtfully. "English governesses marry into the best society out here; but the circle is restricted, and I think that all places are booked for the present. There are the telegraph clerks; but they don't count—they are only working-bees."

"What would you think of Captain Klek as a suitor?" I asked as we jumped up from our hard seat.

“ The proper wife for an adventurer—should—be—an—adventuress,” he ejaculated in five separate breaths as we hopped and slid downwards. “ Has—he—proposed ? ”

“ Not—exactly,” I answered; “ but—wrote—enclosing—letter—asking permission. Wife—gave—letter—Martha—frankly—showed — it; sensible — epistle—no harm—so far.”

“ I should—let—things—take—course—reserve—discretion,” he advised.

When we got near enough to hear the children’s voices, they were shouting: “ Hurry up ! ” But we knew they meant the contrary: “ Hurry down ! ”

CHAPTER VI

PERIL

CASSIS, with its 1,800 inhabitants, lay snugly nestled between two lofty hills. Its pretty little port for fishing-boats and sailing-barges, doing a coasting trade between Marseilles and Toulon, was so free from the usual dirt attending maritime traffic that we could see the living fish breeding among the clean stones at a depth of six feet as we walked along the kerb. The higher of the two hills dominating the scene was extremely bold, with overhanging brows that frowned as if contemplating eventual disaster. The venturesome quarrymen—whose warning horn-blasts were often to be heard, succeeded by a big heavy thud as of a muffled battery—scanned the portentous heights, anticipating the easy task of demolition which should deprive the monster of his threatening aspect.

As we had approached the village—by descending the well-kept *route vicinale*—the promontory bore a particularly black and forbidding appearance. Towards the country its sides were well clothed and cultivated to the extreme crown. But seaward its jagged frontal line was denuded of all vegetation, and under-cut as if by the action of a stormy or unusual tidal wave. Since, however, the Mediterranean at this coast is nearly innocent of tides—spreading the white marginal fringe of its azure robe

at a safe distance from the overlooking cliffs—their crumbling must be attributed to atmospheric causes alone.

Our coachman set us down at the water's edge; and we told him to be ready at three o'clock to take us back to Marseilles. Then Nelson and I, between us, carried the basket of provisions, and we all settled down to lunch in a nook that afforded shelter against the glaring sun.

A small party of miners were likewise taking their frugal meal, some hundred yards off; otherwise we were isolated from the world, or at least all civilised Europe was behind us. The children looked so bright and happy. Between them, as they sat on a large piece of stone, lay a bunch of herbs they had collected while waiting their father's descent from the mountain. We all, in turn, remarked upon the sweet smell of the wild thyme and the tiny blue flowers of the sage. I mentioned the fact of the prevailing barrenness up there. By way of joke, Nelson said:

"Talking of the sage, we found time too short."

"What sage?" I inquired.

"The Sage of Chelsea," he replied, with a laughing reference to the title then given to Carlyle.

Said Lucy:

"Well, that is a strange coincidence; for I had in my mind, while we were waiting there, Thomas Carlyle's description of Mentone: 'It is a beautiful coast, but very awful; the great mountains with bare heads and breasts, rugged and scarred and wrinkled and horrible as the very witch of Endor.' Poor man! that is somewhat typical of his own character, to judge by the latest portrait of him that is published."

“ Oh, don't say that, my dear,” I urged. “ Read his *French Revolution* that has just appeared.”

“ What have you read of him, Mrs. Glenn ? ” asked Nelson.

“ Oh, *Sartor Resartus*, that my husband thinks a great deal of. But it just sends me to sleep.” Here she yawned, and apologised.

It was Nelson's intention to give me a lesson in fishing ; an art which looks easy, but requires to be learnt like any other. He had brought a couple of rods ; and, with a view to select a convenient place, we lit our cigars and sauntered round to the opposite side of the lilliputian harbour. My wife indulged in a siesta—a habit that does not require to be learnt—while Martha rambled on the beach, hoping to pick up some weeds, shells, or other interesting memento of the excursion. But there was nothing of the kind to be found at Cassis. She had not gone far when we two returned to fetch the tackle and leave word where we should be found, if required. Upon glancing upward at the masses of overhanging stones and earth, beneath which—and rather dangerously, so I feared—my two children were strolling at some distance away from their governess, I noticed a dark fissure, from one side of which a huge lump was breaking away and must inevitably fall on March's head ! Before there was time to call out Martha, too, had observed it ; for in another second she darted, frantically screaming, and snatched our dear boy away with her. They fell suddenly, and were blotted out of sight behind a torrent of lumpy loose earth.

“ Oh, God ! ” I cried, shrieked, and staggered. Nelson shouted loud enough to wake my wife a hundred yards away, the veins of his forehead

swelling until I expected they would burst, through the extreme agonising effort with which he vehemently called for "*Secours ! Secours ! Au secours !*" We waved our hands high as we rushed along towards the heap of stones and gravel that had fallen and obliterated my child and his would-be rescuer. It was an awful moment. Our cries reached the ears of the miners; and they came at once running and bringing some of their tools.

My wife and Nova stood aghast, and seemed paralysed, staring with open mouths and starting eyeballs at the column of dust which shot up, and whirled through the air above the debris, beneath which Martha and March lay buried, and into which Nelson and I were already grovelling. The heap was as big as a cottage, and to remove it we began to work like demons, utterly regardless of the risk from above of another avalanche.

Impatient of the arrival of picks and shovels, we employed our hands until they bled again. Dig, dig, scratch, dig, raving like madmen for four long minutes before we were able to reach the first indication of life—or death ! Then, all at once, we heard March roaring at the top of his voice like a nervous child shut in a dark cellar.

"All right ! all right !" we shouted back with tears and trembling, without relaxing in our efforts. Lucy and Nova, who had arrived and were working—both of them—as hard as the rest of us, including the miners (four stalwart Piedmontese)—kept up a reassuring response to the little fellow, whose terror was such that he failed, apparently, to hear us.

It became rapidly evident—as every second a dozen spadefuls of earth were cleared away—that

the two bodies were somehow under cover of a projecting reef, against which the huge detached fragment had struck in its fatal descent.

As soon as the child's terrified screams abated, he heard our consolation; and, in answer to the urgent inquiries for Martha, he was understood ultimately to say that she was asleep! At which intelligence poor Lucy fainted and fell back from her exhausting occupation. But even this distressful occurrence did not stop our indefatigable toil; for she was taken charge of by some women villagers, who fetched sea-water and other restoratives, which they administered freely, mingled with a low chorus of soothing words:

"Courage, madame!"

"*N'ayez pas peur—tout va bien.*"

"*Il est sauvé, votre enfant chéri.*"

"*Là-là!*"

At last a hole was made in the great mound through which we tenderly dragged the dear child, who was then more precious to us than ever. I kissed him almost to suffocation; but his mother behaved as if he had but just entered the world for the first time, so passionately did she hug her boy. His face was slightly scratched, and his clothes were torn. But his fright was unallayed as he told us that he had been sitting on Martha's chest, and that she was—dead!

That confirmed our dreadful fears; and now, a sufficient clearance having been effected by the aid of volunteers, who amounted to a crowd, we beheld Martha, lying flat on her back and stretched at full length, with her head and shoulders well inside the recess. Her feet, too, had most marvellously just cleared within the line of protection afforded by a

jutting shelf of irregular stone, some six feet from the ground.

Nelson sprang to her side; and while we held our breaths, he placed his ear to her chest—kneeling down and holding his left hand aloft. Then dropping it, he said in a whisper that we all heard with intense relief:

“Not dead, but in a swoon!”

My wife, having recovered somewhat from her own faintness, now pressed forward and insisted upon helping to raise the poor girl's head and apply the remedies that were at hand. These, together with the fresh air that circulated in her erstwhile tomb, gradually produced the desired effect, and the colour came again into Martha's cheeks.

She appeared to us to have escaped serious bodily injuries; but upon arranging her hair a wound was plainly discernible at the back of her head. Naturally, everyone suggested fetching a doctor; but the good women around advised our conveying the patient—who had begun to manifest impatience and to talk lightly of her condition—“*A la pharmacie!*” and thither we carried her; for she was too feeble to walk.

She had evidently been stunned by falling with the child in her arms, and the impetus gathered during her dashing flight had carried them into safety. There was a bruise and a small incision, which, being skilfully treated by a doctor who was found at the pharmacy, presented no alarming symptoms. And Martha herself protested that she felt well enough to walk home. She made this announcement in a loud, cheerful voice, so that all might hear—the door of the shop being open.

“Thank God!—*Bon Dieu, merci!*” ejaculated

Lucy, clasping her hands and addressing the bystanders, several of whom responded with "Amen!" for a serious, if not religious, feeling had taken possession of the spectators. It was quite an ovation as we walked towards the inn, at which we began energetically to restore our complexions with soapless ablutions. A pennyworth of pins repaired our clothing, which we brushed for one another in the courtyard—turning round like a tailor's dummy on a perpendicular spit. From all sides came congratulations innumerable and spontaneous, accompanied with many a reference to—or short tale about—similar hairbreadth escapes.

After a while we put Martha into the carriage, which, without horses, was wheeled to a shady spot. Nova and her brother got up and sat with their heroine governess. The way they looked into her smiling face evidenced a triple attachment by means of the strongest cord that binds human hearts together. Which one of us felt the emotion most it had been hard to say. Lucy squeezed my hand to express her joy. Then our friend Nelson, putting his arms one under each of ours, conducted us slowly, and unwittingly, straightway into the

"Little church around the corner,
Whose doors are ever open. . . ."

In this continental public-house for souls we obtained immediate rest and refreshment as we knelt and returned thanks for the divine and merciful restoration of two lives—invaluable to us—from the jaws of a horrible grave.

Oh, the benign accommodation of an open church—free and unsectarian in the widest sense—that excludes neither Turk, nor Jew, nor Brahmin!

It was with solemn intention to formally and publicly thank the faithful girl who had so courageously risked her life to save that of our dear child that I prepared my words as we three returned to the carriage in the pure air of that beautiful spring afternoon. The shrill, yet mellow notes of a rossignol up in a lofty poplar were wafted to our ears, so recently afflicted by the sounds of anguish, amid the extraordinary scene of men shovelling earth away and delving like infuriated dogs after a lost rat—and the golden bands of a declining sunshine lay across our path. We felt, as Emerson says, as if “the whole human family were bathed with an element of love like a fine ether.”

There were still a few people hovering around and exchanging kindly words with the heroine of the day. They made way for my wife to ascend the step, which she had scarcely done before she threw her arms about Martha's neck and kissed her; the tears rolling freely down their faces at the thought of the trouble that might have resulted from the accident. Our French sympathisers were moved at the sight; my words of thanks would have been superfluous. With enthusiastic joy, I put my hand into my pocket, and, withdrawing a few francs, offered them to some of the children as a recompense for their assistance, or that of their parents. But they shrank away and refused the money. So I threw it, broadcast, on to the ground; and, lifting my hat, saluted them all with:

“Merci—merci à tout le monde! Vive la France! Au revoir!”

To which the younger ones responded by repeating the last words.

Here Nelson said:

" *A propos*, the same magnanimity distinguished the miners this afternoon; and even the landlord at the inn declined to accept the five-franc piece I wanted to leave to pay for drinks for the men when next they might enter there. It is a sweet 'touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.' "

We acquiesced unanimously, and the wheels turned rapidly in the same ruts they had made only four hours since; but what had happened meantime? March's spirits and strength having both completely returned to him, he begged to be allowed, while driving home, to sit up on the box between Mr. Nelson and the driver. In that position he held the two long bamboo rods perpendicularly aloft until we should arrive at the Rond-Point du Prado, where we intended to take leave of our friend and companion. As I now sat opposite the smiling—but still pale—faces of my wife and Martha, with my back to the horses, I had a good parting view of Cassis. The treacherous piece of headland showed the alteration in its shape. Owing to the changed direction of the sun's rays, the former sombre hues had alternated and been relieved by a variety of brighter tints—gold, brown, green, purple. At about a couple of kilometres from the village, while proceeding at a walking pace up the hill, we were overtaken by a youth who came running breathlessly after us. His message—for bringing which he persistently declined any remuneration—consisted of a small square white envelope, which Lucy recognised; but which he respectfully handed to the person whose address it bore:

" MADEMOISELLE VERNET,

Aux bons soins de Monsieur Glenn."

Martha blushed as she took it, and smilingly said, "How very kind of you!" Whereupon the youth fled, evidently feeling well repaid. Then she fumbled in order to restore the letter to the place from which it had fallen.

It was but natural, when passing Vaufrège, that we should associate the conduct of Martha with the recollection of the martyrs of the lime-pits. Nova was the first to suggest the comparison, openly, saying:

"Did you think of the Italian comrades, dear, when you rushed towards my brother?"

"No, my child, I thought of just nothing at all, but was drawn as if by a magnet. Nor did I feel anything until I 'came to,' as we say."

"Ah, yes," said Lucy pensively, "from a painless death you came back to a troublesome, and perhaps painful, life again."

"Are you sorry, Martha?" asked Nova, with an arched brow, signifying that she herself was not so.

"Well, I hardly know, dear," was the reply. "An old saintly writer says:

'Sudden death means sudden glory.'

"But the Litany puts it on a level with plague, pestilence and famine, battle and murder," I interposed.

"I think that is intended for the people generally," remarked Lucy. "Total unconsciousness—death—is certainly to be preferred to continued pain. But, unless we feel sure that our sins are forgiven, conscious life, although painful to a high degree, must be preserved. Though life may not be worth living, for the body's sake, death is not worth risking while the soul is in jeopardy. To the

Christian, however, it should be, comparatively, a matter of indifference. 'O death! where is thy sting?' "

"Only among the survivors," replied Martha. "That is to say, those of them who cared more for the deceased personally than for any legacy."

CHAPTER VII

“THOU SHALT NOT——”

READER, were you, in your infancy, left an orphan—quite alone, without either parent, or brother, or sister?

If so, you can, perhaps, recollect what your strongest feeling was, when you may have taken time to reflect upon your position in the world. Excluding idle sorrow, was it not covetousness that became mistress of your secret thoughts? The particular object of your covetousness may have been as absurdly impossible of attainment as the child's wish for the moon. For instance, relations—living ones—which cannot be got by simply ordering and paying for, as some parvenues do for ancestors on canvas. Or you may have timidly desired, or ardently longed for, similar comforts to those you saw were being enjoyed by others who were not orphans. Such a feeling was not wicked, but natural, excusable, under most ordinary circumstances. Covetousness ought not to be stigmatised as envy is—“always a base passion.”

After arriving at years of maturity—if not of discretion—an orphan may see, and seize, his or her chance of becoming like other people by marrying. How many there are who have availed themselves of the privilege or opportunity to escape the thralldom of circumstances? Many an unhappy girl has flown

into the arms of her first admirer, saying practically, if not actually, "Marry me."

Martha was not exactly one of that sort; she neither under-estimated her qualifications nor gave herself away. Her manner was, perhaps, a little too sedate for her age. Her confidences and candour were reserved for the ears of her own sex. She was a woman's woman and not too lavish with her kisses.

Characteristics such as these are doubtless as much, and as often, acquired as they are hereditary or due to environment. One had but to observe Martha's method of instructing our children to perceive the conscientious thoroughness of Madame Vernet's systematic tuition: firmness tempered with kindly consideration, but stern severity against deceit in any form. Such points are very remarkable when discovered in a French governess.

By the children themselves she was never regarded as a paid teacher, but more like an elder sister, and called "Martha," not "Miss Vernet." She was the ideal "mother's help" to my wife.

Martha had her faults, which lay in the direction of ventüresomeness, rashness; qualities which in a man would have been called virtuous in the Elizabethan age. She was, moreover, covetous.

This word "covetous" generally implies a vice. But, while respecting the tenth commandment; and notwithstanding the emphatic denunciations of the ancient moralist, I deny the contention of the modern novelist who says that "a vice cannot be turned into a virtue," and I submit that virtue and vice are sometimes relative and interchangeable terms. There have been many notable examples of lads with a "bit of the devil" in them turning into

valiant and noble men. That pugnacity which blighted their scholastic career was once a vice; but twenty years later it stood them in good stead and was counted a virtue. To covet, "to long earnestly, to crave inordinately, for that which it is forbidden to seek or possess"—even in this, the strongest sense of the word, may lie the germ which develops into virtue. It has more than once prompted us, as a nation, to conquer and to civilise. As individuals, our men of science and genius are urged by a rapacious ambition of this kind; otherwise their progress would be slow, if not hopelessly retarded.

The path from vice to virtue is the same as that from virtue to vice; only, being on an incline, one is going up, the other down. But that there is a top as well as a bottom to this path St. Paul testifies when he says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts."

Acquisitiveness is quite another thing, and the phrenologist might have searched in vain for that bump on Martha's head. If she coveted the best gifts, it was not for the purpose of hoarding them, but to gratify a praiseworthy desire; to become the instrument, or medium, for supplying the wants of some of the world's needy ones, whose presence was constantly asserting itself. A bountiful feast for the stomachs of the poor would have delighted her soul. While they were enjoying "the better part which should not be taken away," Martha would have been quite contented with the renown for her "much serving." Nor did she dream of acquiring something for nothing. That may be construed as a theft, as a crime which must not for a moment be palliated. I never could agree with the dictum that every man has his price and may be

bought as well as sold. But things are different, and I think that Naboth's vineyard might have been honestly coveted and acquired by Haman if he had gone about it properly, or employed a good agent.

As to the scriptural commandment which includes wives with houses and oxen—it is open to a lax interpretation.

If Martha secretly coveted the advantages and power—moral and social—that can be exercised and enjoyed by a couple of human beings much better when they are married than while they live separate lives, she was prepared to give for them the proper price; namely, herself. All missions with a philanthropic side had her sympathy and advocacy, and we were frequently invited to supplement her contributions to such as the *Armée de Salut* and the Mission to the Jews. Her expressions of regret—unmistakably sincere—at the limitation of her resources showed what she would have done if she could, and likewise proved that the benevolent spirit was not bestowed “on business lines.”

Captain Klek's circumstances had been freely discussed by us in his absence. For he had—not imprudently, but with an evident desire that he should not be taken at his own word merely—shown me his papers proving that he was in receipt of a pension derived from the residue of his parents' estate in Austria; also that he had been commissioned by the French Government, which allowed him a certain sum for his expenses. So that, although his pay—other than what he might earn by private trading—was small, it was unencumbered and sure. I urged him to insure his life, to which he replied:

"Very good for widows and orphans; but the man who has no relations—why should he insure?"

"Business relations require it," I rejoined. "You have entered upon an engagement; what is to compensate for the loss of your services, to say nothing of the valuable samples you are taking, in the event of your untimely death?"

"That is a serious matter," said he; "I will insure—it will be better in any case."

Though quick in apprehending the importance of a subject like this, he was not a shrewd man. Like many others—half-pay officers, retired travellers, etc.—he had dabbled in speculative affairs and been duped. Qualified for the post of secretary by his ability to correspond in five or six languages and by depositing ten thousand francs as *cautionnement*, he once joined a commercial venture having its headquarters in Marseilles. He showed me a copy of their prospectus, which he had translated, and which had been circulated among manufacturers in every part of Europe. The directors of the Association professed to guarantee a certain amount of business, or "turn-over," to its adherents, conditionally upon their paying a stipulated fee for advertising and travelling agency. No money was demanded, but goods were accepted at their trade value instead. Of course, these were disposed of by the Company at greatly reduced prices, in order to realise; and the market for them was consequently ruined by the "job lots." It is astonishing that many large firms—not only in France and in Austria, but in Great Britain too—allowed themselves to be victimised in this way.

Our Captain's opinion of England was based on trading reports, and a slight acquaintance with the

West-End of London, which seemed to be the only spot in our isle he had ever visited. Despite the reputed perfidy of Albion, the majority of her sons, he thought, were *mou*—soft, easily imposed upon; her daughters were less liable to the impeachment. Nevertheless, the latter did not compare favourably with their Gallic sisters in tact, perseverance, or economy. Such sweeping generalisations are always open to a multitude of exceptions, I told him. Still, I admitted there were grounds for a Frenchman preferring his own countrywomen, particularly when one sees and considers the masterful influence of French wives—the majority of whom are older than their husbands—in their households, as well as in their shops and factories; aye, and in the higher region of public affairs. Those British advocates of woman’s rights—the assimilation of them to the rights of man—who go to Paris, and, setting up their rostrum in a coterie of smart and fast society, declaim vehemently against the inhumanity of a nation towards the better half of its forty million people, must be blindly prejudiced or they would perceive *L’Eternelle Femme* reigning and ruling everywhere; as Queen of Heaven in the upper realms of the religious minds, as well as below stairs in domestic life, where every little drab may be called *la bonne*; whereas a male servant would never be accorded the title of *le bon*, though he were a valet faithful unto death, or a veritable *homme de peine*. So long as man is no better than he ought to be, this inequality will exist. But it is not to the detriment of his partner—at least not in France.

With regard to economy, the Captain was weak, being generous to a fault, and somewhat extravagant,

with a propensity to find excuses for everybody, himself included. He was like a flat-bottomed boat, navigable in shallow waters, without either danger to itself or risk of disturbing the water-lilies or beds of rank weeds it glides over. With an easy conscience, he would have not only tolerated, but embraced, almost any religion; regarding it from the point of view of consolation under suffering. Such a universalist, had he been trained for a physician, would have prescribed "allo-," "homœo-," "hydro-," or any other "pathy" to gratify the wish of a patient; believing, as many modern practitioners do, that most maladies are controlled by the nerves, which should be first pacified, then fortified; never irritated in order to effect a cure.

CHAPTER VIII

"A HERO IN THE STRIFE"

THE Chemin de St. Barnabé commences at the top end of the Boulevard de la Magdeleine and sweeps down across a dirty little rivulet, the Jarret, under a railway bridge and through the hamlet of La Blancarde. Thence the road rises, and a few hundred yards on the right was the residence of our choice. It was always bright and fresh up there in our *campagne*, which became known as *Aux Anglais*. A fountain played incessantly beneath some fine acacias; and a willow, whose slender trunk was encircled by a climbing monthly rose, bent over a large basin that was nicely cemented and just deep enough for the children to bathe and learn to swim in. An avenue of plane trees afforded ample shade in summer; and the violence of the wintry mistrals was checked by the pines and firs that clustered about the north-west side of the house. The southern sea-breezes reached us coming across, through the Prado, without touching the infected purlieus of the port or the forest of factory and other chimneys in and close around the city.

"*On est bien ici*," was the familiar expression of our French visitors, and we thought so too, notwithstanding the drawbacks of only one post a day, no policeman, no fishing nor sea-bathing. As for the latter, the disadvantage was a questionable one.

Favourable conditions for family sea-bathing are necessarily tight, and an English paterfamilias abroad should maintain their stringency. More than once we took the omnibus to the Bourse, and from there the little steamer which runs the length of the port to the Catalans; or else, the tram to Bonneveine; but we never enjoyed our dips. One trifling incident, which annoyed us much at the time, still attaches to our recollection of those bathing trips. Martha lost her amethyst brooch through leaving it in the cabin. It was a pity, and the more so because the jewel was the only relic that Madame Vernet had preserved of her adopted daughter's infancy. Its intrinsic value could not have been great. Amethysts are common among precious stones; and this one, but for a small circle cut in its face and set with tiny brilliants, was not remarkable. The gold frame mounting, which was probably the most valuable portion, could not have weighed more than a sovereign. It was in vain that we tried to recover the brooch, although we informed the police, offered a reward of a hundred francs, and commissioned a person to attend the thieves' market which is held every morning outside St. Martin's Church.

In the rear of our dwelling was a full-sized white marble bath constructed in a special apartment. This afforded us more enjoyment than dabbling about in the sea among a crowd of strangers, and within view of many undesirable and prurient spectators. The wife of one of our neighbours was in the habit of spending several hours daily wading and sitting in the water, breast high, of an artificial lake they had made in their beautiful secluded garden. With a very ample supply of the fresh soft

water which is canalised into Marseilles from the river Durance, it was always easy to keep one's self tolerably cool in summer, while the ardent sun scorched the leaves beneath which the cigale was shrilly hissing. We spent a whole afternoon once watching a cigale in the last stage of metamorphosis, when she was being transformed from an ugly, stumpy, goggle-eyed, dirty brown chrysalis, clinging by her six legs to a twig that had fallen from an acacia. The process was intensely interesting ; to some thoughtful minds suggestive of a possible realisation of their ideas of immortality, on the Pythagorean model. To prevent the cigale's premature escape, we had enclosed the twig with some wire netting, around which we all sat taking turns with a magnifying glass, and sometimes holding our breaths as the pretty little creature emerged from the longitudinal crack in the back of her former self. First the head ; then slowly, as if with ecstatic efforts, the fore-legs. With these she pressed upon their hollow sheaths to raise her body, the sides of which gradually enlarged, each disengaging an exquisitely beautiful pale green transparent shiny wing, that developed by expanding the creases—one transversal, two lateral—in which it had hitherto lain wrapped or packed like pleated gold-leaf. Finally, the hind-legs were abstracted, and the perfected organism stood exultant upon the ruins of its former self, which it was only too ready to discard, as a gaily bedecked launch quits the stocks and the rough and disorderly surroundings of the dockyard. With what an ineffably delicious tremor the beautified cigale began to extend and exercise those wings and thrill the fresh air of a new life ! A life which it would probably enjoy to its full natural length, as might every other unobnoxious

species of insect ; for the entomologist with his green gauze and cyanide never passed that way.

The day following this lesson in natural history we received a letter from Captain Klek enclosing—as usual—one for Martha, over which she seemed to get more excited than she was wont to be upon similar occasions. I was smoking a cigarette and swinging high up in the middle of a curious old elm whose branches had been trained to form a kind of cage, but large enough to admit of seats for several persons, as well as a hammock. The blinding rays of the midsummer sun were at that hour—4 p.m.—cut off by a corner of the house that shaded this favourite resort to which Lucy and I frequently betook ourselves and there awaited our daily cup of tea. Clad though we were in the loosest garments made of the lightest woollen or cambric material, it was necessary to *se dépêcher lentement*, as Boileau says, if one would avoid the glare and enjoy the heat. Accordingly, that day Lucy joined me rather earlier than usual, but mounted very leisurely the dozen easy steps I had constructed for her, and lowered herself into her chair as gradually as possible. Before she spoke I perceived she was agitated, and said :

“ I hope nothing has gone wrong, my dear: What’s the matter ? ”

“ Nothing with me,” she replied ; “ but Martha is in a terrible state of irritation, so I have advised her to go and lie down.”

“ Something in the Captain’s letter,” I suggested, adding : “ But you should not let her affairs worry you too much ; they will right themselves, no fear, where Love is at the helm. Here comes the tea, ever welcome, delicious beverage ! That will do us

both good; only, we must not stir for half-an-hour after drinking it."

As we lay gazing up through the green, leafy crown of our lofty summer-house into the intense ethereal blue, Lucy told me that I was mistaken. Martha's temper was ruffled, not by the letter, but, through a conversation she had had with Madame Garot, the *femme de ménage*.

Here I submit the first of a batch of letters that came into my possession a dozen years later, the perusal of which prompted me to write this story:—

"St. Barnabé,
"6 July, 1881.

"DEAR CAPTAIN KLEK,

"The details of your extraordinary career contained in your last letter, added to what Mr. Glenn has told me about you, seem almost too romantic to be real. To be shipwrecked, to lie sick in a fever hospital, to act both nurse and doctor to your fellow-patients; then suddenly to turn out and do battle amid the exposures and hardship of a campaign in a strange land! Again, to be starved into capitulation, imprisoned, and compelled to witness the clumsy murder of your master and countryman, the brave Maximilian! Such experiences exemplify the extremes that a man is able to endure; at one time in the Great Lone Land of ice and snow, at another in the sweltering tropics. Both fighting and suffering, active and passive!

"You have evidently learnt to labour and to wait. We women are denied the military rôle. It is very irksome to those who, like me, have to do all the waiting first.

" The story of my life so far is short and uneventful. I am almost ashamed to relate the incidents, they are so few. But since you ask so particularly for it, I will not excuse myself.

" Madame Vernet—my dear foster-mother—told me that when she first received me I must have been about four years old. The person who gave me to her did so for a consideration in money. This practice is not very uncommon among the lower classes in London, according to what I have read. I never wished to return to that level, or tried to ascertain who my unnatural parents were. My earliest recollections are associated with a bright home in Berners Street, and also a kind *bonne* who always spoke with reverence and affection about 'Madame.' At seven I went to a day-school in our neighbourhood; but before that I practised on the piano lessons set me by Madame Vernet, who was generally away from home during the day-time. She always left an orange or some chocolate upon the top of the piano for me to eat as a reward upon my accomplishing the allotted task. At eleven I attended a school at the Polytechnic, and soon after that age Madame Vernet began to teach me miniature-painting, of which art she was a professor. At fourteen she took me to assist at her stall in the London Crystal Palace bazaar, which I dare say you know was near Oxford Circus.

" Enough about myself; excepting to return thanks for your solicitude concerning the results of the accident at Cassis. I feel all right now. Mr. and Mrs. Glenn are as good as ever—they send their kind remembrances.

" We are as comfortable as the weather permits. But you must be enjoying (?) greater heat than our

26° centigrade. Do not expose yourself too much ;
and avoid other dangers, among which, I believe,
that Arab treachery is the worst to be feared.
Conservez vous, and write as often as possible to

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ MARTHA VERNET.

“ P.S.—This is addressed as you wished, to—

“ *Ali Ben Zara*;

“ *à Fez, Maroc.*

“ The mail leaves Marseilles to-morrow.”

CHAPTER IX

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

THE average French charwoman—in the towns of Provence, at least—will bear favourable comparison with English ones, both in respect to sobriety and the amount of work accomplished within a given time; as well as for breakages and wastefulness. But for pilfering and lies they may be reckoned at par. Like many another *bourgeoise* family, we found the services of such a domestic aid indispensable to our *bonne*, particularly in the laborious task of daily washing and occasionally staining the floors, which in Marseilles are nearly all—including the stairs—composed of red hexagonal tiles, for the manufacture of which the city bears a universal reputation.

Our *femme de ménage*, Madame Garot, was a typical Marseillaise, with a ready tongue and an agreeable winning face, that was garnished, however, with a black scrubby moustache and a small beard in two points. Unfortunately for their beauty, these hirsute embellishments had been subject to occasional mowings with the razor; otherwise they might have vied with those of *La Belle Nazarène* then exhibiting for four sous on the Quai du Vieux-Port.

As if to demonstrate the compensating balance of Nature's laws, the face of Madame Garot's husband was quite bare—a large round, colourless face.

But the two were never seen together. She might as well have been a widow, she told my wife; for he was totally absent from home for at least nine months in the year, and contributed almost nothing towards the support of his family.

"You have three children, have you not?"

"Yes, Madame,—an infant of eight months, a girl of eight years, and a boy of ten."

"How do you manage to earn a living for all of you?"

"At present it goes well, Madame. I commence my day at six o'clock, when I go to the Boulevard Boisson to *faire la coiffure* of half-a-dozen demoiselles who work at the capsule factory. Two sous each, that makes twelve. For the three hours I make here I gain another twelve sous. Every afternoon I do the linen for some neighbours who go out to work. *Le Petit* goes to the Jesuits' school, and *la Petite* nurses the baby. Like that, *ça marche*. But we cannot eat meat every day."

After that communication Lucy made it a daily practice to give the poor woman some food to carry home with her.

Madame Garot not only took in washing, but she took it out again—away from her cabin in the locality known by the name of Saint Jean du Désert (a person, by the way, whose saintly clothes never required washing), down over the bridge and beyond the railway-station, to a street through which the cheap and pure canal water flowed. And there she sat, or knelt, rinsing the clothes in the gutter, after having soaped and banged them well with a heavy wooden bat on the kerb-stone. Marie Garot would sit there too with the baby on her sisterly lap. The head of the little sallow-faced child was covered

with one of those close-fitting caps that are never removed until the children's heads have hardened and they receive their first wash ! It was pitiable and disgusting to see the flies that settled around and were encouraged to remain on the infant's eyes, although there may be some truth in the contention that they prevent disease and ensure a bright, clear vision.

The prevalence of this and other dirty but well-grounded habits must not be set down, simply and solely, to carelessness and neglect. Madame Garot said that she was anxiously particular about her children's heads—the uniting of the parietal bones—and, if there should be a tendency to brain fever, she had recourse to a splendid remedy, which consists in cleaving the breast of a live white pigeon, and, with both hands, tearing the bleeding, palpitating parts open, and applying it while hot as a poultice to the scalp.

“What a horrid barbarity !” exclaimed my wife with disgust. “Such treatment is fit only for savages.”

“But, no !” her informant retorted with sudden warmth. “We are not more savage than those consumptives are who wait in the early mornings at the abattoir to drink the warm blood of the beasts as soon as they are slaughtered.”

There was a certain amount of truth, and so there was of coarse brutality, about this well-favoured *paysanne* or daughter of the soil ; sufficient to have justified Emile Zola in his estimate of the characters of his unsophisticated *compatriotes*. We took particular care, however, to prevent the contamination of our children ; and they were not allowed to become too familiar with the Garots.

Martha liked to hear the woman's pure patois, and smiled whenever she displayed fluency in *Provençale*, talking in that dramatically expressive tongue, with well-modulated accents, side-looking cast eyes and becoming gestures of the head and hands; the latter presuming, under a momentary impulse, to extend and touch the shoulders, and even the face, of an interested listener. But the poor girl paid dearly for fascination. She had been listening, indiscreetly, to Madame Garot's complaint against her absent lord.

"My husband is a commercial traveller, doing Algeria and Tunis. He earns plenty of money, but spends it on his other wives."

"A bigamist!" exclaimed Martha, with a look of repulsion, while her face changed colour.

"But he is no worse than others," was the quick rejoinder of the penetrating sycophant, who drew her chair closer; and while deceitfully pretending to soothe, by lavishly stroking the backs of the girl's hands, she continued:

"Do not flatter yourself, *ma petite*, and think that your Captain is any better than the rest. All these fine travellers in the countries of the Arabs are gay; they change their names as well as their dress, and never save any money—how can they?"

"Go away!" ejaculated Martha, briskly rising and shaking off the human snake; while the woman's eyes dropped, as did her hands into her lap.

It was this scene which produced the mental perturbation that my wife alluded to up in the tree. Now, looking backward and contrasting the state of Martha's feelings when she quitted the insinuating

mischief-maker with the tone of the letter we have just read—and which was written that same evening—we may remark the composure of her mind and perfect self-control, indicative of the absence of any misgivings about the private life of her beau-ideal.

CHAPTER X

A SQUARE MEAL

BOUILLABAISSE has been as often and ably as it has been differently described by epicurean writers and literary cooks, just as the Provençal dish has happened to appeal to their respective senses of sight, smell, and taste. In this country of Scotch beef and Southdown mutton, no dish, be it composed of a roasted knighted loin or the "perfect picture" of Box and Cox, can compete or compare with the seething, glittering, golden combination of the score of choice ingredients contained in a proper *bouillabaisse*. Let the afore-mentioned plain-cooked honest joints satisfy the palates of plain people seated at table indoors, with their backs to the window in the cold, dull climate of England; the compound, *bouillabaisse*—call it a fish soup, or a chowder, or any other name you like—will sooner make the mouths water of those who are born to toil and to revel in the land of sun and oil and wine.

Still, many Englishmen of a ripe age who have read their daily and weekly papers, and followed the special correspondence of the late George Augustus Sala, or the present "Dagonet," possess a tolerably familiar acquaintance with, if not an actual reminiscence of, the flavour of this *pièce de résistance*, which to 999 out of every 1,000 Provençaux is simply irresistible.

Our cook—an Arlesienne—was generally to be

depended on. The meals were never late. Whenever she came from marketing, Madame was welcome, aye, invited, pressed, to see the basket emptied, and prompted not to overlook the bargains. The plump and tender fowls that Marie bought seemed to have been reared expressly for her; and, with their necks already wrung, awaited recognition as she scanned the full rows of bare and dainty breasts. Her fish were never of the refrigerated stock that is damned with faint praise, but they had dark red gills and wore curly tails. And although we knew that in financial matters she took the *sou par franc* and kept it, we winked at the pernicious custom rather than lose her valuable services. Whether she could make a *bouillabaisse* remained to be proved, until Nelson proposed to supply the fish for one.

This event was to take place on a Sunday. We had invited him over, and he came early—at nine o'clock. The morning air, delightfully fresh, as if wafted direct from Paradise itself, played throughout the house, for every door was as yet open wide. An hour later they and all windows and shutters would have been—as usual—closed for six hours to exclude the heat. The floors had been duly watered and wiped before breakfast. I sat outside facing the garden and reading the *Petit Marseillais* when my friend came leisurely round the house and took a seat beside me. He was quite smart in white ducks; the loose ends of a black lace necktie garnished his ample-bosomed shirt *bien blanchée*; and a Panama hat, that I had vainly tried to match in town for a hundred francs, shaded his brows. His thick malacca cane (loaded) was tucked under his arm. I wondered how he had contrived to carry it as well as the fish, and dreaded lest he should have forgotten to bring the latter.

But no, he began at once to talk of his success with the rod by which he had sat that morning from sunrise till early Mass. The *merlan* and *loup*, *dorade* and *rascasse*, each in turn he had either caught or bartered for with other *pêcheurs*, in order to procure the needful assortment. But for the *écrevisses* and the *langouste* he had been obliged to go to the market. We both went straightway into the kitchen to examine the lot as it lay on the table. He selected, and put into my hand a red mullet, which I held out at my arm's length while admiring and expatiating on its superb quality.

"This is what you call a *rouget de roche*," said I.

"Yes," replied Nelson naively, "but he is not such a red republican as was Rouget de Lisle."

Before I had time to appreciate the joke, a strange masculine voice from the dark end of the kitchen started singing:

"Allons, enfants de la patrie-er!"

And simultaneously a greasy, dirty little shabby man with a bald head stepped forward and clasped my hand, giving it a very hard squeeze, and a series of distinct impressions with his thumb on my knuckles. Then he called me "*Mon frère—Franc-maçon.*" But I, spurning him, angrily replied:

"I am not a Freemason. Who are you? What do you do here?"

Nelson interposed, and with a laugh explained the mystery, saying:

"Oh, I hired him to carry my basket up from the market."

Turning to the man, he continued:

"But you need not stay; it is not polite, you know."

The seedy-looking individual was taken aback, and thereupon prepared to go, but in a shambling, apologetical manner. Suddenly he stopped short, and, pulling some printed papers from his pocket, handed me one of them while saying, loudly and deliberately :

" *Je suis Monsieur de Vilerot du Chateau Gaillard à Chinon, département de l'Indre et Loire*, at your service. Freemason of the Grand Orient Lodge, I was present when your compatriot, Charles Bradlaugh, was elected. Do you know Leo Taxil? He is a friend of mine. See, here is one of his latest works (handing me an illustrated pamphlet entitled *La Bible Amusante*, which I immediately let drop on to the floor). Why do you deny that you are a Mason?"

We both looked straight into each other's eyes as I answered :

" Because I am not one. What makes you assume—— ? "

He shrugged his shoulders, and with an air of astonishment rejoined :

" *Ma foi !* You made me the sign with your arm when you held it out to show the fish in your hand—making a true square, *comme ça !* " (imitating my action).

We laughed irresistibly at the curious little oddity with his blarney and gammon, and the noise attracted my wife into the kitchen. But I, wishing to get rid of the man, deferred explanation to her, and, taking some coppers from my pocket, put them into his hand, saying :

" There you are—*allez !* You will miss the bus if you do not look sharp."

Then, pretending to withdraw, together with my friend, we cautiously waited near by close to the

entrance. My wife having given him half a loaf, our servant commenced reproaching the fellow for not leaving, and finally she hustled him off the premises, from which he had contrived to steal three eggs, beg some bread and gather ten sous, as well as the franc that Nelson gave him for an hour's work.

"What a disreputable-looking creature!" exclaimed Lucy, when she joined us in the garden and had heard the account of his introduction.

"Monsieur de Vilerot," I repeated, remarking: "How many such people there are in Marseilles. With shady and doubtful antecedents they dare to use the *de* before their names. I wonder the Government does not put a tax upon it. If we English made such frequent use of the prefix or preposition of honour, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would assuredly class it with armorial bearings."

"But no one does in England since the days of the Normans," said Lucy.

"Excepting his satanic majesty," ventured Nelson, with a smile. "This poor de-Vil excited my pity when I first saw him. But did you observe the contemptuous look he gave us as he picked up the blasphemous tract which you let fall as if it was red-hot?"

"Yes," I replied; "let us ignore both him and his wretched trash."

"I must be off to my duties," observed Lucy; "where shall I find you if I should want you before dinner?"

"Up a tree," said Nelson; and we betook ourselves to the hammock and cosmopolitan gossip until the gong sounded.

Now the best of a *bouillabaisse* is its comprehensiveness, for it contains something for everybody. If you dislike, or are afraid of, the rich sauce, take a solid lump of *merlan*; or tickle the titbit out of one of the crustacea and lay it upon a slice of the *pain trempé*, an absorbent and choice portion, good for children, who lick their fingers after it, as also for their grandmothers, who need never mind the bones! Served hot, out in the open, beneath the tinted shade of planes and acacias, and within reach of the fringe of a cool pure fountain spray that laughs tantalisingly in a miniature rainbow at the passion of the sun's ardour, *la bouillabaisse* enhances the enjoyment of these sensual attractions. To what extent we may not know; but certainly our feelings are shared by some few members of Nature's family other than the domesticated ones. For a beautiful gossamer-like butterfly—the *podilaurius*—appears overhead while resting on its wings and sinking, floating diagonally through the fragrant air, until, suddenly awakened to a sense of drifting into dangerous contact with the rapids of stern humanity, he paddles away upwards again out of sight and beyond the strains of the cigale's echoing vibrations. Oh, the blissful joys of a healthy open-air life!

Our special repast of fish *suprême* turned out to be a *chef d'œuvre* as much relished by every one of us as ever was an Indian curry by a British major or a haggis by a Scottish highlander—and, let us hope, better digested. Nelson, gallantly refusing to accept any of the praise that was bestowed on the fruit of his rod, sent for the cook to receive it all. In fact, he for once forgot himself in thinking of her in a practical sense. That is to say, he sur-

reptitiously slipped a five-franc piece into her hand, knowing all the while that our regulations against tips to servants were as severe as those of the South Eastern Railway Company !

In respect of wine, we were not connoisseurs. Still we had learnt to detect, and detest, the stuff made at Cette from dried Greek raisins ; as also the plastered and dyed mixture from Perpignan. For household purposes we got a weekly supply from a neighbouring vintner ; and for occasions like this we drew upon a small consignment of light Sauterne and a second *crû* Bordeaux—Chateau Léoville, both of which I had obtained through the agency of a *pharmacien*, who sold us likewise a sweet Grénache. Taken in this order, coffee follows comfortably, together with cigars for the gentlemen and toothpicks for all.

The post came just after we had dined—it was later than usual that day. I was rather loth to open my correspondence there and then. But Martha, radiant in possession of a letter from Captain Klek, having trekked off to her own laager, Lucy and I devoured the contents of the weekly budget from home, while Nelson took to catechising the children, beginning with the etymology of the word “ dinner.” The morning’s scripture lesson was the next topic, which they considered dry, and would have avoided, until their examiner asked them what they thought about the miraculous draught of fishes.

“ *Bouillabaisse !* ” ejaculated the saucy boy.

“ *A propos ! mon brave,* ” exclaimed Nelson ; while Nova shook with laughter at her brother’s boldness.

“ But,” she ventured, “ there was another miracle we read in the Gospel by St. Matthew (it is not in the Prayer-book) about Peter catching a fish with a piece of money in its mouth.”

"Ah?" said the instructor, pretending to receive instruction; and, addressing March, he asked him his opinion of that transaction.

"I wish you could find Martha's brooch like that," replied the child, laughing and wriggling to escape.

But Nelson hugged and kissed him, while expressing a conviction that he would one day become as clever as his sister, but that Martha's brooch was lost for ever.

"I noticed a change in her," he remarked to us when the children had gone; "Martha looks depressed."

"Not on account of the letter she has just received from the Captain," said Lucy. "I never knew anyone take things so coolly."

"Variable," suggested Nelson.

"Rarely so," I thought; and said: "Martha's character is a solid one; and her conduct has its serious phases pretty often. I do not mean to say that she is piously religious or of a pensive mood. But thoughtfulness, premeditation, distinguishes nearly all her actions lately. I sometimes think that she was really younger than Madame Vernet supposed when first she mothered her. Premature age sometimes acquires a seat on the brow of the little orphan-waif, and never in after life leaves it entirely. Being nursed and trained, however kindly, at a home where there were no other children, and under the care, however loving, of an unmarried, elderly, sedate guardian, Martha partook of the ways of maturity rather than the more natural ways of youth. Again, she went to advanced schools; and during her teens frequented with her affectionate foster-parent such institutions as are to be found in the locality of Regent Street. She

took music lessons at St. George's Hall, and on Sundays attended the popular scientific lectures given there. Her reading has been rather extensive, if not so profound, as her admiration went for such authors as Herbert Spencer. Girls like Martha grow habitually to disregard—unconsciously it may be—the attentions of young men who, without understanding, dub them blue-stockings and pedants; consequently they do not marry; or else they become attached to men much older than themselves, as in the case of Dorothea Brooks and Mr. Casauban. This precludes much, if not all, of the light and brightness from the picture; and thus many of the noblest works of the divinely Great Master appear to us indistinct, until by some accident, perhaps, or special treatment, the *chiaroscuro* is properly developed."

"You do not think that the accident at Cassis has left any permanent ill effects upon her, do you?" asked Nelson.

"No," replied Lucy. "She may have been rather excited lately, but she does not look depressed now. See, here she comes."

We regarded the object of our conversation as she stood with a hand upon my wife's shoulder, until Lucy rose and they retired together. We remarked as they walked about through the *bosquet* the emphatic way in which Martha was expressing her mind, evidently upon a point of great importance to herself. This is explained in the second letter I take from the batch:—

"Sunday.

"DEAR CAPTAIN KLEK,

"I am sending you a single-worded telegram as you request; but it is neither of the two

words you suggest. It will be for you to turn it into a negative or an affirmative reply to your proposal, when you read what I mean by the word 'conditionally.'

"There is a notion current among smart society people that married life is best enjoyed when husband and wife live a good deal apart, occupy separate homes, and meet, or exchange visits, now and again almost furtively. Thus, it is said, they are able to fulfil their respective duties to society, while preserving mutual respect and the freshness of a first, or early, love; for 'familiarity breeds contempt.' Now, I am not of that opinion, and could not put up with so loose an attachment to the man I love. Unless it should be discovered that there had been fraud on one side or the other, I do not believe in separation or divorce. But once the union is agreed to between us, my mind will ever rest on the words of the English Church service: 'Till death us do part.'

"You will judge now whether it will not become too tiresome for me to be always with you, like one of your own hands (some men call their wives their right hands); aye, a better, or worse, half of yourself; your complement, and, in an emergency, your second self. If circumstances oblige you to travel, I must always accompany you. If blest with health and strength, we will go together; or stop on the road together should sickness or infirmity strike either one of us.

"Conditionally, then, upon your solemn agreement with this interpretation of the marriage vow, I answer 'YES' to your question, and will ever remain,

"YOUR MARTHA."

CHAPTER XI

A FOUL SHOT

ALL who go to the Riviera by the P.L.M. must needs pass the station junction of La Blencarde, which is on a lower level than the principal Marseilles station at St. Charles, and six kilometres beyond it. The line slopes after crossing the Chemin de St. Barnabé, and, 500 metres farther—before it reaches the first-named station—the passenger trains crawl down at a slackened speed, particularly at a spot where, on the municipal side of the railway, there existed a great mound of sandstone rock some hundred feet high, that was destined to be removed; for a gang of miners had long been at work upon it, constantly boring and blasting.

A peculiar interest attached to this bit of St. Barnabé, on account of the train which conveyed Queen Victoria and her suite to Mentone almost coming to a stop, while we, as a family, on one occasion, tendered our homage, and the children cheered within a few yards of the royal carriage window.

An officer of the *octroi* guarded the railway-line at the level where a foot-crossing could easily be made; his sentry-box was on the little stone bridge over which the lane called St. Jean du Désert straggled away up towards the convent of La

Compassion belonging to the ladies of the *Sacré Coeur*. This part of the suburbs became less inviting to Sunday ramblers from the crowded city as the summer waned and the foliage, already scorched and shrivelled, dropped off the trees in the surrounding *campagnes*—two of which were just then to let. These detached properties were each enclosed by its own high walls, useful enough to secure privacy, but valueless as an Indian's mud hut to resist dynamic force. In the rubble composition of these fences, on their sunny sides, dwelt the lizard, both green and grey, but only small ones. Many of them appeared without their tails—the result of combat, perhaps; although several of these interesting reptiles in our immediate vicinity might have justified a claim for damages against our son, who, by dint of searching, discovered their lines of retreat and promptly cut off their retreating lines! But he found that, unlike Bo-peep's sheep, the lizards preferred to leave their tails behind them.

The existence of one wall of unusual thickness (said to have formed part of a bastion from which the siege of Marseilles was attempted by François I^{er} in 1524) was threatened by our target practice. This exercise became a daily amusement for me; while my wife and Martha would each take a turn. When I first suggested their doing so, it was with the idea of familiarising them with the sound and overcoming natural timidity. We had a pair of excellent revolvers, a wedding present from Lucy's relations for whom Captain Klek was then soliciting orders. Besides which, I had a Smith-Wesson's "44," which was rather too strong for ladies' use. They soon became proficient in handling the

weapons, and I grudged giving either of them points, even at twenty yards.

My mornings were partly occupied with correspondence from my own firm, to which Lucy used to say I stood in the relation of a somnambulist rather than a sleeping partner, because I was continually inventing and instructing them how to carry out my ideas, on the backs of post-cards.

We seldom went to the Anglican church in the Rue Sylvabelle—it was too far off. But we occasionally attended Mass at the convent, whose neat little chapel stood at the end of a fine avenue which began close to our house and extended to a point dominating the locality above described. The ceremony of baptising a new bell for the convent took place on a Sunday morning, and we all went to see it. As we were rather early in getting there, and as it was necessary that someone should call at the house of our charwoman—Madame Garot—to ascertain why she had not come to work that morning, nor the previous day, we asked Martha to go by a very short cut across one of the properties that were to let, and into which the sisters—*religieuses*—had a private doorway. It was a pretty garden, and had been well kept up. Among the abundant evergreens, dahlias and chrysanthemums were in evidence, but over smaller plants a thick layer of brown leaves lay like a great quilt, the fringe of which nearly obliterated the paths. Lucy remarked how well and happy Martha looked as she opened the creaky door, and, leaving it ajar against her return, tripped lightly down along the track, rustling and dispersing the crisp golden flakes with a resounding *frou-frou*. We expected to see her back again and in church within half-an-hour. But an

hour passed first; then my wife became fidgety and urged me to come out with her and the children, leaving the holy fathers—of whom there were a dozen at least—to chant, and to sprinkle the campanological infant; which they continued to do for another good hour.

Upon reaching our home, great was the astonishment for us to perceive Martha talking with a bronzed gentleman whose hair was close shaven, and whose neck was encircled by a white Oriental-looking scarf. They were seated out in the garden, but rose directly they heard us coming round the house. He was none other than Captain Klek! We saluted with much heartiness. But I noticed that his neck was stiff, while Martha, pale and nervous, whispered with my wife. Thereupon I started and said:

“What is this mystery?”

To which he replied by taking my arm, and together we walked into my study.

“There has been tragedy this morning,” he said, playfully smiling as we both sat down on the same divan. “I waited to see you all first, before going to my hotel to get my wounds dressed.” Hereupon he rose to go.

I was thunder-struck; and exclaiming, “What wounds?—Let me see!” I sprang forward to prevent his departure. Having forced him to remain seated, I helped him remove the cloth from his throat. This operation disclosed a dozen small gunshot wounds about the nape of the neck. They were still bleeding, and must have been painful.

With a reluctance which I could not then understand, he began to describe in a few words a

dastardly attack that had just been made upon his person.

"Captain Klek, you must not leave here," said I emphatically, with much concern; "stay with us until a medical man has seen you—I insist. Lucy" (to my wife, who had caught sight of the wounds and was alarmed), "I shall go and fetch assistance at once; there is no time to be lost. Pray take charge of him."

Notwithstanding the Captain's smiles and protests, I took the matter very seriously and went out into the main road, fortunately at a moment when a throng of people were coming away from church. To an *abbé* whose face was familiar to me I spoke, asking whether there happened to be a doctor among them; and there was one. I thanked the clergyman, but did not detain him with explanations. To the doctor, however, I opened my mind; not only to describe the state of the patient, but to expatiate on the cowardly and brutal conduct of the individual—whoever he might be—who had shot the Captain; presumably by accident, but evidently at very close quarters. The victim was alone in my study; so, having introduced the doctor to him, I closed the door upon them and went in search of my wife for any further information that she might have obtained. She had been, however, too busy with her preparations to question Martha for a second-hand account. Our midday meal being set, the gong was sounded, and at the same moment the doctor emerged from the consultation and took his departure, leaving word that our guest might eat and drink all he could. So we sent him a portion, and (ourselves) we tried to make up for lost time.

It appeared that the doctor soon recognised his

patient's surgical experimental knowledge, and between them it was a settled opinion that no lead remained. Nothing more serious was to be apprehended than a fortnight's enforced idleness in a recumbent position.

While the necessary materials for dressing were being procured, and Martha was gone to the convent to engage a sister as nurse for him, the Captain was strenuously urged by us to go to bed, which he did. But he disobeyed injunctions by getting up again later in the day, and acting as if nothing had happened, in spite of our pessimism and many grave cautions.

It was anything but a day of rest, for no sooner had we heard a full account of the affair than I started to go to the nearest police-station and put the authorities in possession of the facts. There I was referred to the central *bureau*, where a *com-missaire* sat *en permanence*. He seemed to give every attention, and promptly appointed two agents to accompany me; and with them I returned to St. Barnabé in a cab.

CHAPTER XII

IDEAL JUSTICE

OF the three words used to form the motto of the French Republic, the last in order seems to have been especially adopted by their police-force, the individual members of which, when out on duty in the streets, are seldom to be met with singly. With a remarkable, if not a praiseworthy, self-abnegation, they evince an affectionate and fraternal gregariousness. If by accident a solitary one finds himself in presence of a job, he will make a fuss and do his best to attract and obtain assistance before venturing seriously to attack it. This brotherly feeling does not manifest itself so much among the small body of our countrymen to whom the peace of our cities and towns has been confided, together with a wooden truncheon.

It was at Cannon Street—near the railway-station—I once saw a fresh-looking young constable, whose moustache was yet downy, seize and take into custody a sturdy rough of about forty years. They were quickly surrounded by half-a-dozen of the latter's confederates, who began to pummel Robert most unmercifully. Nevertheless he clung to his prey, and, in spite of buffeting, was dragging him, unaided, until someone snatched at the regulation whistle hanging upon his liveried chest, and blew it sharply. But when his mate from the adjacent beat came up, the former, almost out of breath, said :

"I can manage this one, Tom; you look after the other lot." Then, turning to the crowd, "Will somebody pick up my helmet?"

At Geneva, too, I witnessed a similar instance of egotistic greed on the part of a municipal guardian. He was in the act of pushing before him a blatant, half-drunken man of the *ouvrier* class, when his prisoner protested by shouting, "*Je suis français*," and struggled hard to get free. The determined Swiss, regardless of the braggart's nationality, having somehow pinned his man's arms behind his back, succeeded after a while in conducting him across the open Place Neuve; and, doubtless, finally to the station.

"A bon chat, bon rat."

Again—but on the other hand—at Bordeaux, not long since, it was my privilege to observe and be able to appreciate the unselfish behaviour of an *agent de police*. This functionary was posted at the corner of the Rue Vital Carles, near the Hôtel de Ville. Suddenly a woman came up to him, and, indicating a dissolute fellow standing close by, charged the latter with picking her pocket *à l'anglaise* (!). This the incriminated one denied with such vehemence that the policeman could not help recognising an old offender. Thereupon he, unmindful of the traditional *esprit de corps*, had the temerity to catch the man by the sleeve, saying, "*Venez donc!*" But the artful thief fell suddenly to the ground, and, slipping out of his coat, tried hard to get away.

"*Ah, non, non!*" cried the prosecutrix and some of the witnesses as they gathered and closely invested the would-be Joseph; while the police-agent seemed bewildered in the *mêlée*, until he (appar-

ently) bethought him of the motto of the force, for he said :

“ Wait a bit—I go to fetch my comrades,” and he suited the action to his word, with the result that, some five minutes later, six of the fraternity came out of the *poste*, by the gateway of the Hôtel de Ville, at the conventional trot.

But, alas ! the crowd, which contained more than one of the culprit’s sympathisers, had relaxed ; and, they failing to retain him, the prisoner (as such no longer) tore away past where I was standing, and in advance of the six stalwart myrmidons by fifty yards or so. His motto was evidently the first word of the trio : *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*.

Such intrepidity ought not to have escaped the notice of the authorities, who might, with advantage to their system, educate their *personnel* by making them change places with the criminals for a short period now and again. A course of punitive training might sharpen their wits if it did not also develop muscular agility, the lack of which handicaps them and gives the hare an advantage over the hound.

One is reminded of an ancient picture somewhere used as a signboard, which represents a sturdy highwayman carrying under his arm a diminutive “ Charley ” who struggles and kicks in the air while crying menacingly :

“ If thee doan’t put me down, I’ll tak thee oop ! ”

Of the two men delegated to assist our *garde champêtre*, or rural policeman, in detecting Captain Klek’s assailant, one rode with me inside the cab. His general physique was below the standard of average full-grown felons. His face, though not tanned, was more of the colour of his tobacco-stained fingers than that of the cheek of a Liverpool

constable, whose position and duties must be analogous to those of an *agent de police* of the town of Marseilles. Scaled, two Liverpoolians might have weighed as much as three Marseillais.

These two were polite enough, refusing nothing that was put before them or into their hands; while paying great attention to the testimony of Martha, and only a little less to that of the Captain. Her evidence was as follows:

“As I crossed the *campagne* P——, I saw Captain Klek entering by the opposite gate. We met nearly midway, and after exchanging a few words turned to go back the way I had come. At that moment we heard a loud report as if from a gun discharged only a few yards off, and the Captain instantly fell forward, crying ‘*Allah il Allah!*’ But he got up again, and I helped to put his handkerchief around his bleeding neck. He said, ‘It is not much, but as we are trespassing we had better get away quickly. Of course, we looked around and towards where the sound came from. There was no one visible. The house was shut up. I wanted to return and search for the miscreant, but Monsieur dissuaded me; and, seeing his condition, we hastened into the *Impasse Bombinette*, which leads to the *Boulevard du Chemin de Fer*, and thence home.”

The Captain said:

“I came from the direction of the *Boulevard Chave*, and asked of two little children the nearest way to St. Barnabé. They directed me through the open gate of the *campagne*. I saw no one else until I met Mademoiselle.”

“Why did you cross the *campagne*, Mademoiselle?” the agent inquired. “Did you expect to meet Monsieur?”

"Not at all," she replied; "it was a great surprise. I intended only to go and see our *femme de ménage*, Madame Garot. But as I have explained, I did not do so."

From facts we got to suppositions, and argued both with vivacity, our united opinions inclining to the belief that it must have been an accident on the part of some *chasseur maladroit* who lacked the moral courage and sense of honour to come forward and acknowledge his tragic blunder. At length one of the agents lit upon a clue by inquiring:

"Have you any enemies, Monsieur le Capitaine?"

"Not one," he promptly replied; then suddenly recalling his memory, he added:

"Ah! let me correct that. Yes, there is one—Ben Maka."

The agent repeated the name twice without apparently recollecting it; but his companion interposed, clapping his hand on his comrade's shoulder and saying with earnestness:

"But was not that individual condemned to two years' imprisonment since last winter? Can it be possible that they have released him already?"

"Ah! nous y sommes," ejaculated one.

"Voilà notre homme!" echoed the other; and they looked joyfully around.

The Captain was constrained to recapitulate his account (which tallied with my recollections and the description Nelson gave me) of the fracas at the Café Glacier, and an animated discussion ensued. I cut this short, out of consideration for the invalid, and, after emptying their glasses, the brace of judicial ferrets were let loose upon their quest. Two hours later they returned quite jubilant, as if they had secured their game. But no, he was neither scotched

nor killed. Nevertheless, they said they were in a position to prove that Ben Maka was none other than Madame Garot's husband; and, moreover, that he had visited her as late as the previous Saturday.

It was thought to be more than probable that Ben Maka was the assassin, for he had disappeared from the spot ever since the time of the attack. The gun he must have used was discovered lying in a bush near the house of the *campagne* that was to let. It was likewise ascertained that the proprietor, who lived in Marseilles, had been shooting birds during the early hours of that morning, and he had (confessedly) left the loaded weapon just where Ben Maka, *alias* Garot, had found it ready for his vengeful purpose.

Here the men stopped in their hurried report, and cast their eyes on the floor as if that was the end of a bad job. We looked at each other, until Martha said quite peremptorily :

"*Eh bien!* What are you going to do? The man must be brought to justice."

"*Ah, ça!*" one of them exclaimed in a hopeless tone, which the other confirmed by beating the air with both his hands, adding :

"That is another affair."

And they went on to explain that special efforts would necessitate special arrangements to be made with the *commissaire*. So that it was quite clear they had done all they intended to do for the refreshments and the two francs a-piece which we put into their hands to pay their omnibus fares—a matter of two sous—and that a much larger bribe would be required for the *commissaire*.

I undertook to wait upon that gentleman; and,

with that assurance, the officers politely retired, saying :

"Au revoir ! Messieurs et Dames."

"Adieu !" cried the Captain as the door closed upon them. "They will search everywhere but in the right place, and at all hours but the proper one. There is no chance of redress. We should not trouble any more about the affair. I shall be healed in a few days. Now" (rising) "permit me to thank you all very, very much, and please let me go to my hotel by the next bus."

"Oh, no ! Captain Klek," we chorused ; "don't go away, but stay with us for a few days at least."

"It is dangerous in more ways than one," said Nelson, "for you to venture out of doors at this time of night."

"Do, pray, listen to our request," urged Lucy as she held his arms ; while Martha looked appealingly, so that he must have been embarrassed.

"We have a good bedroom to offer you," continued his hostess ; "the nurse, too, is secured, and the doctor is expected to call here again in the morning."

"We all hope you may soon recover," I added, "but there is no telling what the result of this may be, and you would be rash to expose yourself unnecessarily."

"My dear madame," replied the Captain, with emotion, as he took her hand and fervently kissed it, "you are all too kind to me. It shall be as you wish. I will try to avoid giving needless trouble. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Then we settled down to a quiet discussion of unimportant matters, particularly avoiding reference to anything more exciting than politics, or the weather,

until the evening meal, which occurred later than usual.

Although Martha, for one, was naturally anxious to hear from the lips of the Captain the reason of Ben Maka's hatred, we tacitly agreed not to probe his memory, the incidents of his recent voyage sufficing to entertain us.

It was strangely amusing to hear them address each other by their christian names, denoting the existence of a secret treaty more binding than the elegant new ring which Martha wore now—and always afterwards. It was curious, too, but Lucy and I both remarked the resemblance between their features—such a likeness as is sometimes observable in the faces of couples that have “clomb the hill thegither” and celebrated their golden weddings.

The night passed peacefully, but in the morning the Captain's condition forbade his rising. The nurse, who had returned to the convent after dressing his wounds, came back again early and remained to meet the doctor, who now, as soon as he had regarded the case more seriously, ordered his patient to stay in bed.

Thenceforth the sister, in her white *coiffe* and black dress, became one of our family circle.

A melancholy air hovered about the house. In the kitchen a series of practical lessons in the preparation of invalid dishes was attended by Lucy and Martha, who vied in the concoction of *tisanes* and *bouillons*. The tiny bright charcoal fires sunk in the spacious hob, as upon the high altar of humanity, were never allowed to die out. The *pot au feu* shared its vigil with *casseroles* and *bouillottes*, while one at least of the aspirantes to the *cordons bleus* was

fain to instruct her pupils out of *La Bonne Cuisinière* in preference to *Mrs. Magnall's Questions*.

My wife drew my attention to the fact, and for a time relieved our governess of her tuitional functions.

"She is jealous of the nurse's privilege, and is as ambitious to excel in cookery as she is to acquire a knowledge of medicine and qualify for nursing. Her greed for information is almost alarming."

"A clever and a good girl," was my comment.

"Yes, Peter, her ideal life is that of a medical missionary. 'To be good is not enough; one must *do* good,' I have heard her say."

CHAPTER XIII

RATTENING

WHATEVER might have been the ground, or prime cause, of Ben Maka's animosity, the unmanly vengeance that characterised his spiteful act was very properly condemned by everybody—neighbours included. Madame Garot feigned illness, and pretended to know absolutely nothing more beside the fact that her husband had been home and gone away again the next day. Where to was a mystery the solution of which was supposed to be the particular task of the police. The Captain's opinion of the result to be anticipated from that quarter was shared by more than one of us on the Sunday night. We thought it would be waste of time and utterly useless to attempt to follow up the clue. But when, on the Tuesday, the doctor's face betrayed concern, and he could not deny or pretend to ignore the feverish symptoms which his patient developed, we began to wish for the capture and punishment of the fugitive scoundrel.

Nelson had promptly called in response to my letter, and we were all four within doors that were closed tight, busy discussing what to do and how to begin it. It was just after tea-time; the children had gone up to their playroom and were calling for a light which Martha had promised to bring with her. In the *salle à manger* the lamp had not yet been lit,

but we were sitting in front of our first fire that winter, blazing pleasantly from an elm log set across a pair of large, old-fashioned, curiously wrought iron *chenets*. Lucy had given her usual evening orders in the kitchen, and expected we should be undisturbed.

And so we were for ten minutes; then a sudden urgent tapping caused the housewife to rise, with the word "tiresome" on her lips as she unlocked the intervening door.

"*Madame ! Madame, regardez !*" said the *bonne* in a breathless voice, "look on the floor at that box—it smokes ! The little Garot left it there just now when he called for his mother's apron."

"*Où est il ?*" demanded my wife.

"*Parti !*" was the loud response.

Martha, who was close behind Lucy, sprang forward, ejaculating :

"Oh, dynamite !"

And, stooping down, she clutched with both hands the small box, which appeared to be a common *chauffrette* or wooden footstool lined with sheet iron—nothing more. Then, holding the fuming burden at arms' length in front of her, the intrepid girl quietly and quickly stepped out into the yard and set it down gently against the wall abutting on to the street some ten yards away from the house. Instantly, as if only beginning to realise the danger that was so imminent, she jumped backward, giving a shriek of alarm.

We men, having followed sharply after her, drew back directly we saw that she had—wisely—put herself at a safe distance. This was the work of a moment; the next was marked by the loudest detonation I had ever heard. It stunned us, and

shook the ground like an earthquake. Fifty window-panes thereupon popped and jingled their brittle glass hail down into the yard. A big gap was made in the outer wall, as the brick and stones bulged out and inward, and toppled down—exposing us to the gaping regard of our neighbours, who crowded round in amazed curiosity. Some of them very kindly proffered their sympathetic aid, which, happily, was not needed, while we became quite bewildered and unable to answer their simple question, “*Qu’est que c’est ?*”

Lucy flew up-stairs after Martha like a flash of lightning, and met the two children and the sister all trembling with fright. Together they burst into the Captain’s room, to find him fast asleep! So they retired almost as quickly as they entered.

In the yard, Nelson—nothing daunted—began with a lighted candle to search the grounds for the remains of the infernal box or machine, for the purpose of identification and conviction. I dispatched a messenger at once to the *garde champêtre* or the police (the former was never to be found at the right time or place), and prepared myself to start in quest of the urchin Garot, whose name we were careful not to mention aloud too soon.

It was necessary for me to go cautiously, or I might have been accompanied by a dozen vulgar busybodies. So I took the omnibus as it passed towards town, and, alighting at the *bureau de tabac* in the hamlet of La Blancarde, went inside and invited a tradesman there to join me.

To him I explained the matter as we hurried along by the railway line vigilantly looking both right and left, and stumbling into many a rut in consequence of the darkness, which was almost

impenetrable (being scarcely relieved by the miserable oil lamps strung up high, a hundred yards apart), during the whole length of the thoroughfare called a *boulevard*!

Presently we overtook the young rascal, who, before he was spoken to or could have recognised me, tried to escape by hiding in the thicket hedge. But we, stopping in front of his niche, urged him forcibly to proceed until we got to the bridge guarded by the *octroi*. Holding the boy fast by the collar, I turned his cheeky face up under the dim light that distinguished the sentinel's box.

"*C'est 'pas ma faute !*" he cried, forestalling my questioning; and went on to say that he had only carried the *chauffrette* into the kitchen to oblige a *monsieur* who made him a present of some cigarettes.

In proof of his statement, he pulled the packet out of his pocket, but took care to hold it fast. Said I:

"I don't want to deprive you of the nasty things, if you like them. Just come along with me to my house, where you have been in the habit of receiving much better presents—*ingrât que tu es !*" And I frowned at the little scamp.

"Let me go first and take my mother her apron," he pleaded, holding up his small bundle.

My companion thereupon snatched the parcel from him, saying:

"I will take it to her; you go with the gentleman," and immediately he left us.

The boy came very reluctantly, I grasping his arm. He was a slim lad. I could have carried him against his will but for his wooden *sabots*, which he knew how to wield in self-defence better than I did the boxing-gloves. As we turned into the Chemin

de St. Barnabé, the tradesman rejoined us, and we were not long ere the people about our door made way for us all to pass in, but not without salutations lacking in compliments and unanimity, to which the culprit responded only by a sullen frown.

“ *Ah ! voilà le misérable !* ”

“ *Mon dieu ! comme il est sot de se laisser attraper.* ”

“ *Tu veux faire sauter les John-Bull-goddams, Garot ?* ”

A couple of weak agents of the police-force stood before Nelson as he sat in the dining-room taking down notes. The pair might have passed for the identical ones I fetched on the Sunday. With the same dress, they wore the same epidermic tint on their faces and hands. There was a difference, however, between their respective voices. Besides, while one nodded his head and said “ *Parfaitement,* ” as a comment upon nearly every sentence that we spoke, the other used the word “ *Evidemment* ” in the same way.

What with the presence of half-a-dozen more or less officious neighbours as audience, our apartment assumed the aspect of a *palais de justice* as Le Petit Garot was being put through his mental paces in order to elicit a description of the *monsieur* for whom he averred he had acted. Though we were four to one—plus the agents—our task was hopelessly difficult, on account of the boy’s tergiversations and obstinacy. Lucy sighed, and Nelson was losing his patience while the wretched little brigand remained persistently silent with his hands behind him. The clock alone spoke—ticking reluctantly, and striking as if by constraint—until I was prompted to run up-stairs and consult our invalid, whose intermittent fever had subsided during the long

sleep that defied the noise of the explosion, and whose improved condition permitted him to listen to Martha while she propounded a theory of the abominable and outrageous plot.

"Bring the *gamin* up here to my bedside," said he, making an effort to raise himself. The sister came to his assistance, and was arranging his pillow as I went out of the room. And when we—Lucy and I—returned with the boy, the Captain had assumed very much of his wonted appearance, about which there was a kind of magnetic charm that usually affected an interviewer. Now it seemed to spell-bind the culprit while he underwent the Captain's experiment of putting false words into the mouth of an unwilling witness.

"You say that the person who employed you to do this act was a tall, thin man?"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"He had a long beard—had he not?"

"Like a goat, *monsieur.*"

"And did not resemble your father in the least?"

"Oh, no! *monsieur*—not at all," with alacrity and surprise.

"The *chauffrette* was a new one, heavier than your own which is now at the house.—Are you quite sure it is there?"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"You did not know what the strange *chauffrette* contained?"

"*Non, monsieur.*"

"Neither did I, for I was asleep when the explosion occurred. Do you know who I am?"

"*Oui, Monsieur le Capitaine.*"

"Yes, I was a soldier once. Can you guess what my dream was about?"

The boy's face brightened with a funny smile as he said :

" *Le gros canon, monsieur.*"

" No, you are wrong. Come closer, and I will whisper it in your ear."

The boy drew near and lowered his head, which the Captain took between his hands and regarded him fixedly, saying in a low tone :

" Look straight at me, Garot, right deep into my eyes, and tell me the colour of them ; yours are brown like the *marron*."

The youth shirked compliance, turning sullenly aside ; but his questioner persisted, calmly yet resolutely :

" Come, look into my face, *mon pauvre enfant*. I am not angry with you."

At length their eyes met and were transfixed. We left them alone for a good five minutes. After which, the door was opened by the penitent urchin, who went straight away to repeat his evidence—not the lies of the Captain's suggestion, but the confessional truth—to the *commissaire*. This bit of strategy had converted the little rattener.

" I told him," said the Captain, " that I dreamt I saw him and his father together in the quarry, collecting gunpowder with which to blow us all up ; but that God's beautiful angel was standing over us with wings spread like a shield. I said that I loved, and would trust, him ; and that I wanted him to disobey his father whenever he might tell him to do that which is wrong. I promised to forgive them both if he would go and speak the truth to the *commissaire* ; also that I would send a present to his confessor, who would be sure to grant him absolution."

Having touched as well as astonished us by his leniency, the Captain continued to speak :

“ So you can believe me, that boy is saved, whatever becomes of his irrational parent. The repairs to the wall and the windows I will pay for as penance for having overstepped the bounds of veracity myself when I adopted the substance of Martha’s suspicions as my own dream. For the end in view, if it be good in itself, justifies the use of means otherwise questionable, and a laudable motive changes a mortal sin into a venial one.”

“ You are a Jesuit ! ” I exclaimed ; but smiled excusingly, as did the rest, particularly the sister. “ But I cannot allow you to pay for my broken windows. I protest the penance would be too heavy for such a peccadillo. The punishments of your church are not usually so much out of proportion—are they ? ”

“ Sometimes they are—immeasurably so,” remarked the sister with emphasis, which left the sad impression that she herself was a sufferer in that way.

“ It is a complicated question,” remarked Nelson ; “ but I believe, from what I have seen and known, that the ordinances of the Church of Rome are far less terrible—since the days of the Inquisition—than are the natural consequences of sin themselves.”

My wife, assuming a serious air, remarked :

“ If that wicked child is truly saved, the credit is due, in the first place, to Martha’s ingenious suggestion.”

“ Oh, Captain Klek is welcome to anything of mine,” ejaculated Martha, with a short laugh.

“ You can well afford to let him have that, Miss Vernet,” said Nelson impressively, adding in

measured tones, "while to you yourself we all gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness—under Divine Providence—for having saved us from a terrible death. May God bless you for your bravery."

So saying, he crossed the room and shook her hand heartily. Then we all, including the servant, followed suit, each adding a few words, the children taking final possession of the hands of the heroine.

She was much affected by the formality of this act—its opportuneness was so striking—and rose to reply to our congratulations. As she did so her eyes were directed upward and her chest expanded. Then, as if recollecting herself, she suddenly turned and embraced Lucy, shook hands with the sister, with Nelson and with me, and said to us in a tearful voice :

"You overrate the importance of my actions; and are all too kind in your thoughts about me. I do not deserve praise for doing what you yourselves would have done under such circumstances. Good night."

Then, taking a lamp which the servant had brought her, she gave her hand to be kissed by her reclining betrothed ; and, before retiring with her adoring pupils, stood for a little moment smiling with a complacency inexpressibly beautiful, leaving us in speechless admiration of a living picture worthy of a Murillo. The Captain was the first to break silence, which he did by saying :

"You see, my guardian angel is more than a dream."

"Do you know," said Nelson, as I saw him out at the gate, "there is a magnificent picture in the Luxembourg Gallery in Paris, of a woman holding a lamp aloft as the embodiment of Truth ? "

“ ‘ *La Vérité*,’ by Jules Lefebvre, I remember it,” I replied.

“ Well,” he rejoined, “ I was impressively reminded of it to-night by Martha’s attitude. She resembles that picture, and in some respects bears a favourable comparison.”

“ Plus drapery,” I suggested.

“ Yes, and a sweet dimpling smile which is almost enough to make one regret that she should be going to marry a man old enough to be her father.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE COMMON ENEMY

“ THAT which is said with intent to deceive is as bad as telling a lie.”

These words used to form a heading in our copy-books. For not writing them out neatly we incurred the penalty of having to learn by heart and to repeat the Scripture text: “ All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

Such plain teaching as this was thought to be good for boys; while at the dame-school little babes who fibbed were made to stand in the corner, with a bit of red cloth attached to their mouths.

Young Garot’s jesuitical tutors had evidently omitted these corrections from their educational course. They rather esteemed the clever lad who could, without blushing, look them straight in the face while telling a deliberate falsehood.

The equivalent word for a downright hell-deserving lie is not to be found in the French dictionary; nor is the average Gallic mind susceptible of that wholesome horror of lying which is instilled into the descendants of the Puritans. Only let the motive be a plausible one, the lie is excusable. In the category of hair-splitting degrees of deviation from the rectitude of plain truth, between a mental reservation and palpable perjury, there would appear

to be none mentioned that imply grave violation of the Frenchman's moral code. For example :

A *menteur* is one who hides the truth for selfish purposes.

A *fanfaron* does the same for vanity's sake.

A *mensonge* is a discourse advanced against the truth with the object of deceiving.

Then there is the *mensonge innocent* which (in the opinion of the utterer) injures nobody.

A *mensonge officieux* is made to be agreeable, or useful, to anyone.

And so on, rising almost into an order of merit.

In a conversation between Englishmen, to contradict bluntly with "I do not believe it" is an affront tantamount to an accusation of lying which anyone possessing self-respect will resent. But the colloquialism "*Je ne le crois pas*," which is frequently used in French dialogue, is not considered an insult. That this innate disregard for truthfulness should coexist with an almost preposterous idea of chivalry, and that keen, high honour which forms the text and rock-bottom argument in all apologies for duelling, is curious if not surprisingly strange.

A perception of the logical consequences of the vicious habit might be excused amongst the depraved and lower classes, disqualified by ignorance and assisted as they are by the clergy in ridding themselves of the immediate penalties by the confessional. With professional men the case is otherwise. An *avocat* will, notwithstanding his formal initial declaration or oath, invent and presume upon the credulity of a judge without compunction, other than the fear of being found out before the verdict is gained. Professional secrecy, which is legally

binding on members of the medical faculty, is made the excuse, not for refusing to disclose, but for concocting lies with the object of thwarting prudent and judicious inquiries and throwing inquirers off the scent. Thus the family doctor of a candidate for matrimony is approached by the parents of the *fiancée* to ascertain if the young man's constitution is good. They might as well desist, and (better) save the fee; because the reply will depend on the doctor's opinion of the desirability of the match upon other grounds than physiological ones. He will not say, "Madame, the law forbids me to disclose," etc.; but mendaciously recommend a tuberculous patient as perfectly sound and fit.

At a period to be referred to in the next chapter we thought of placing our little son as an *externe* at an academy of excellent repute in the adjacent Route des Chartreux. With that object I called there during lessons, and stood unperceived, watching a class of boys. At the sound of a marble dropping the master demanded sharply, "Whose is that?" No one answering, he put the question, "Is it yours?" to each boy separately, but without discovering the delinquent. They all stoutly disowned the fugitive taw, and protested perfect ignorance of its proprietor, in spite of the teacher's alternated threats and promises of leniency. Play-time arrived. The master, having withdrawn, hid behind a curtain, and, watching, surprised the real owner of the marble, who returned slyly to seek for it on the floor. Confronting him, the master, with an angry look, exclaimed :

"Ah! you told me a *mensonge*."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy complacently, "and I did not flinch or look guilty—did I?"

"True," admitted the master.

"Eh, well, they all knew it was mine; and as you did not ask me first, I followed my leader. *Voilà tout.*"

Then the master, relenting, said:

"Go away; next time I'll be sharper than you."

He was rather a young tutor—son of the principal. I was moved to say:

"Excuse me, but will you explain why you let that boy off so easily?"

"It was only a marble," he replied.

"No," said I somewhat indignantly, "there was the lie!"

"A *mensonge*, yes, but such a little one. And then, you see, his motive was unselfish."

"What, the dread of punishment an unselfish motive?"

"No, it was not that, but pure *camaraderie d'école*. As a matter of fact, he is one of the best and cleverest boys in the school; of such young men great scholars and diplomats are made."

"Granted," I said; "and admitting also that he is a nice-looking lad, he is too young to be permitted to use his discretion in thwarting yours. A *mensonge* can become a dangerous weapon to play with; and you do not seem to appreciate the enormity of a lie *per se*."

A shrug of the shoulders was the tutor's final answer, as if he considered the matter too trifling and my style dictatorial and irksome. The effect upon myself was a certain hopelessness that weighed heavily in deciding the question of educating a boy at a French school.

When I jokingly called the Captain a Jesuit, I did so without thinking first. I knew him to be a

Roman Catholic; but I was not aware that he had received his earlier education at the hands of the clergy of that important Society which assumes the name of the great Master who taught so unequivocally: "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay." Neither did I imagine that his confessions were regularly made to priests of the Laxist order, whose Moral Theology condones mental reservations and amphibological deceptions that turn black into white, and enable a person to evade replying to a direct question by saying, for instance, "I say, Yes," which would convey to the mind of an ordinary questioner an affirmative, whereas it is allowed by some confessors to pass as a simple utterance, or expression, without relative force.

Captain Klek was a man of genial temperament, very slow to take offence unless it was manifestly intended; then his resentment was swift enough. His presence in our household was a source of comfort to everyone. Nobody complained or thought of trouble in serving him. At set times of the day he would entertain us—the children by themselves, and, after they had gone to bed, the grown-ups. With him we travelled, at one time through Egypt on camels' backs as well as in dahabeahs or on slender ambling horses; and, astride mokes, we rode into an ostrich farm, and along over the soft track towards Suez which Waghorn's caravans and real English coaches took in the Overland Route to India.

"Why, you are too young to recollect Waghorn," said I one day.

"Quite so," he replied; "but my father knew him personally, about the time of your first Great Exhibition. He was a pioneer of the Suez Canal

project. That fact is recognised by de Lesseps, who is putting up a bust to his memory at Port Said."

"Which memory is very badly preserved in his native country," I remarked, "since his two sisters have been left to die in poverty—one of them actually in the workhouse. In the year 1851 it astonished many people, as well as broke the heart of Waghorn himself—whose friend wrote to the papers suggesting recompense in some form or other—that the Queen of England never listened to the appeal or promoted him."

"But I know the secret," rejoined the Captain; "the true cause—it was drink! He was intoxicated when he was presented to Her Majesty. The Prince Consort noticed it and corrected him at the time, saying, as Waghorn stumbled or faltered, 'The other knee, Lieutenant Waghorn,' and actually helping him to retire. His wife was a lady of title by her own right."

"Yes, I had read that; and it was her money that Waghorn spent in carrying out—or rather, establishing—his system, which first shortened the voyage between little England and her great Eastern possessions," I observed. "The Queen did write a nice letter of condolence to the widow, Lady Waghorn, who resided at Barnet. But for all that, the name of Lieutenant Waghorn is not so much as mentioned in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* excepting in referring to the statue of him erected at Chatham. Perhaps the merits of the eccentric yet intrepid British officer will be brought to light some day. The London County Council might do worse than give his name to a new street between Cornhill—where the Overland Route offices were first opened—and the city of Calcutta, which lies in a straight line

due east. Or his effigy might be stamped on the reverse of an Army Temperance Association medal over the words, 'From my example warning take.' "

At another séance we accompanied the Captain across the Atlantic to the West Indies, and thence to Vera Cruz, Puebla, Orizaba, and Mexico itself; taking part in France's last inglorious campaign—but one!

It is but reasonable to suppose that Martha was the most interested listener; although, unlike Mary at the Master's feet, she worked hard all the while, nearly keeping pace with Lucy, who was prodigiously adept at crocheting white bed-quilts—things that to most people are more useful than antimacassars.

Martha spoke very little; but we could easily see that her heart was bent on accompanying the Captain—when they should be man and wife—in all his future travels. Once she referred to Dr. David Livingstone; at another time to Sir Samuel Baker; both of whom took their wives with them into Africa. To her the Captain explained more fully the nature of his trading transactions with the natives; and she was not slow to suggest that her own services might be utilised as an expert shot in proving and recommending small arms to purchasers. It was a lucrative business. He had done well on his last journey, for there was no lack of money in Morocco; although it is habitually hidden away for fear of the Sultan's exorbitant claims, the heavy embargo or inordinate tax he levies on the possessors of hoards. Besides, there was a burning desire among the chiefs to acquire good weapons. And while opinions differed as to the rights of the natives on the one hand and the real intentions, ultimate

purposes, and methods of civilising invaders, Captain Klek had the foresight to prompt the Moors to help themselves—and him—first, by furnishing them with the latest and best patterns from Birmingham and Brussels. Guns made in France he did not sell : that was part of his plan—to pretend to be hostile to his adopted nation, in order to elicit the information that was needed to facilitate contemplated military operations or pave the way for land-grabbing explorers. His employers, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, winked at the double dealing of their agent. But the malicious Ben Maka, who travelled in the same line and represented some *armuriers* of Paris and St. Etienne, could not understand or brook the competition. Lacking the *finesse* and *savoir faire* which pre-eminently qualified the Captain, Ben Maka blunderingly betrayed his feelings and worked them up to the pitch of furious and insensate hatred in the manner we have seen.

Skill with fire-arms is worth attaining as a mark of self-respect.

Our garden resounded more than ever with the reports of the daily practice of Martha and the convalescent Captain, until she acquired his proficiency, and became, like Edmond Danté, a dead shot.

At a short distance they rehearsed the famous scene in William Tell, and alternately changed places. We used to tremble and beg them to desist. But they would laugh; and, in return for our fearful solicitude, put an apple or a quince that they had riddled with small shot upon the dessert dish and jestingly call it "forbidden fruit."

With respect to the murderous attack on the

Captain, as also the diabolical outrage to which we had all been exposed, these were, as he had foretold, practically ignored by the police. Beyond a perfunctory visit of a *commissaire*, no steps were taken by the authorities by way of remedy or compensation. The few loudly expressed sympathies of the neighbours that were tendered us at the time of the occurrence became shifted like a weathercock into an opposite direction. So that the upshot of the whole affair was a considerable and growing feeling of pity for the *peu-chère* who had lost her daily charring for us, and also for her boy, who had been badgered and reprimanded by the police. Because we took no further or vindictive action we were tabooed, and generally suspected of having hatched and concocted the story of the events, the traces of which were rapidly disappearing.

That Garot—*alias* Ben Maka—could have been easily apprehended was notorious. Several people came and told us of his whereabouts, which we in turn duly communicated to the bureau; but it was of no effect.

Meantime, the attachment between Martha and the Captain grew and showed itself strongly. They seemed to have been—in common phrase—made for one another. Strangers would speak of, and to them, as if they were brother and sister. Lucy was constantly referring to the extraordinary passion with which Martha was seized as indicative of her future happiness. It would, she said, be a true marriage of body and soul for both of them.

CHAPTER XV

AN EDUCATIONAL OUTLOOK

IT was only eight months after our eventful excursion to Cassis; and now the prospect of our having to part with Martha confronted us. Her future career was the most important for consideration, yet we began to be concerned about the education of our children when she should be gone. The *lycée* was recommended for March; and since there was not at that time a *lycée* for girls in Marseilles, we were strongly advised to place Nova as a boarder with Mademoiselle J——, who was already entrusted with the daughters of the *élite*, including the only child of a well-known English clergyman. Thus the brother and sister would not have been far apart, and we might have visited them both once a week or oftener. There was an alternative plan suggested—namely, to advertise in a London paper and fetch another governess over. This would have retarded the children's French and involved some trouble and great risk, to say nothing of greater expense, which we rather shirked. There was no immediate hurry; so we obtained prospectuses and made various inquiries in a leisurely way. In fine, to dispose of the subject, Lucy and I found fault, amounting to an interdiction, with the "order of the bath" as it was administered at both schools. To put it

plainly, we learnt that the girls in Mademoiselle's exalted institution seldom went to outside baths, while inside the establishment their only chance of an ablution, beyond washing the hands and face, consisted of a foot-bath occasionally, which was taken in the kitchen in presence of the cook! At the public *lycée*, according to the printed rules, boys were "permitted" to take a foot-bath once every fortnight; and no other kind of bathing was stipulated or mentioned.¹ Considering the habitual laxity of most French administrations, this partial cleansing process might easily be avoided and deferred from term to term until the Judgment Day, when "he that is filthy shall be filthy still."

The winter was passing agreeably enough; although the thermometer had registered below freezing-point sufficiently to permit of skating in the open Park Borelli, as well as in the "*Sakatung-runk*," as the natives pronounced it. Another unusual sight for them was a slight fall of snow, which disappeared, however, a few hours afterwards. With respect to the mistral, whose effects are regarded so differently by many, including persons who have never wintered in the South of France, we learnt to think of it in the benign aspect of a purifier; and, owing to a strict observance of the premonitory

¹ The following extract from the prospectus of the Lycée Descartes at Tours (term 1900) shows but little improvement in the hygienic régime:—"The pupils take foot-baths every fifteen days, and whole baths when they are prescribed by the doctor. Baths necessary for cleanliness are taken at least twice during the three months, in a neighbouring establishment." Again, the editor of *Le Matin*, Monsieur H. Harduin, writes (January 30, 1902): "In my time at the Lycée we never washed our feet. Moreover, at the University I believe it was strictly forbidden by the rules as being considered a useless practice and a sign of character 'mollesse.'"

atmospheric indications, which usually gave us a day or two for preparations, its objectionable features were modified. We seldom heard it spoken of as a terrible calamitous scourge.

It was evidently Captain Klek's fate to follow in the wake of unsuccessful pretenders. His correspondence with the firms he represented at this period became frequent and urgent in view of the revolt of the Colonels in Egypt, and the probability of its success under Arabi Pacha. So that a voyage to Alexandria was the next and inevitable task for the Captain to undertake. How to make it fit in with the marriage project became the absorbing topic, not only of the couple themselves, but for Lucy and me too. We willingly helped them to clear the ground before sowing their crop of joys and sorrows.

Under the conditions of Madame Vernet's will Martha would be entitled to the whole estate provided she married in England and within two years of her coming of age. Otherwise, she would receive only the half. But in the event of her legitimate parents coming forward and claiming her at any time before she attained her majority, the whole estate was to be realised and given to the Hospital Saturday Fund. Accordingly, Captain Klek and Martha had arranged to go over and remain in London during the legally specified period. The state of political affairs in Egypt, however, obliged him to go there at once. Several heavy consignments of arms and ammunition were already on their way to a firm of German commission merchants at Alexandria, with whom Captain Klek would have to co-operate in the disposal of the goods.

It was a great disappointment for Martha, and she acquiesced with reluctance. He predicted a speedy termination to the insurrection; but we demurred, basing our opinions on the newspaper telegrams, which we studied and discussed together. Excepting for the rigid terms of the will of their benefactress—whose testament they would have been foolish to ignore—they might have accomplished the ceremony by a bare possibility before the next steamer left Marseilles for the East, or, at a push, overtaken the last one which touched at Genoa. At one moment, so anxious were they to enter upon the career which seemed to be ordained for them, that—pending a final reply to our united representations to the London solicitors—the notice of banns was given at the church in Marseilles. Eventually, after deliberations over all sorts of possible and impossible contingencies, giving rise to reflections hilarious as well as mournful, it was decided that they should be married on the day of his departure for Alexandria, directly after which we should accompany Martha to London, and wait there until the Captain returned, when the marriage ceremonies and formalities *de rigueur* should be performed.

CHAPTER XVI

AN EVENTFUL DAY

WE all, including Nelson and the sister from the convent (the termination of whose engagement did not coincide with a cessation of all further kindly interest in our concerns), became witnesses of the French ceremonies and formalities, both at the mairie and at the church of Saint Vincent de Paul, wherein a few days previously, under the sanctuary of a picturesque but much worn confessional, Otto Klek and Martha Vernet had separately and solemnly opened their hearts and laid bare—more or less of—their innermost consciences to the priest of God, according to the tenets of their religion, and received at his hands a plenary absolution.

But this is anticipating. Let me go back and explain.

Nelson had come early and brought a couple of very handsome bouquets for Lucy and Martha, as well as several smaller ones for the rest of the family. He was always so kind and thoughtful, and so punctilious in such matters—my first and the only true friend I found in Marseilles. Said he, as we stepped from the house on to the long, well-kept tiled path which I called my quarter deck :

“There is more trouble brewing. I dread lest before the Captain goes away he should be again exposed to a disgraceful scene, and possibly a dangerous encounter with his old enemy.”

"Why, what reason have you to suppose that he is being waylaid?" I asked with an impatience that waxed into anger. He replied:

"I will tell you at once, but——" And he looked around the garden to see whether we were likely to be disturbed.

"All right, go on," said I; and we sat down on the nearest seat as he began to relate:

"Coming down to the market this morning at an early hour, I met the young Garot, to whom I gave two sous, which elicited more than his usual polite gratitude. For upon my inquiring, quite casually, where his father was, he said: '*Il se trouve a l'Hôtel du Petit Voyageur.*' I gave the boy two more sous and left him, resolving myself to play the detective for once. For which purpose I returned to Endoume; and presently, disguised as a half-drunken British seaman—a not uncommon character in this town, as you are aware—I was very soon sitting in front of a cup of black coffee inside the dirty restaurant of the '*Petit Voyageur.*' There were already two other men present leaning with their noses nearly touching each other and two empty *petits verres*. To recognise Garot the elder and Vilerot the freemason, one glance sufficed; and I sprawled across the table as if in a snooze, while, in fact, I was for the nonce nothing better than a common eavesdropper. The skinny Vilerot was actually consoling the bloated Garot, who whined and shed tears like a child. Both men were maudlin drunk. Now and again the former put his arm about the latter's neck and showed his sympathy by kissing his forehead. '*Qui t'a fait ce grand malheur?*' he was inquiring as I sat down; and the other responded between tearful sobs: '*Qui? Who*

but the accursed Prussian that undersold me wherever I went; so that to gain my commission I was forced to invent orders and sign in a disguised hand the names of customers who did not exist? The *canaille!* it was the same man who struck me in the face and showed me his revolver at the Café Glacier. I wish I had accepted his challenge. *Sacrebleu!* 'But why not do so now?' Vilerot demanded eagerly. 'Look here, my dear companion; you have no other work to hinder and no character to lose. At least we can threaten him with a letter; I will be the postman.' 'Ah! that will be too late if the *chameau* leaves Marseilles to-night,' was the peevish reply. '*Tant mieux*—so much the better,' contended Vilerot; 'he will be obliged to square us before he starts, for the sake of his wife. She will be terrorised by what we shall write. I see the way to do it!—*Allons! Garçon, vitela tablette! je vais écrire.*' 'His wife!' echoed Garot. 'What a good idea! And they are to be married to-day,—Ha-ha!'

"And that is how I left them there and then," said Nelson, concluding. Then we looked at each other for a minute in silence unbroken, until I remarked, with a sigh:

"I am afraid this will be a sad day as well as a happy one; and we do not know which will come first."

"Well, what is to be done?" was the rejoinder. To which I replied:

"Nothing yet; nor let anyone else know. But we will be on the alert—secretly armed. My knuckles itch to punch their heads; but my boots claim first innings."

The mail-boat for Egypt and the Levant was

timed to leave the quays at five o'clock in the afternoon. It was therefore thought best not for the wedding party to return to St. Barnabé for the final meal; so that was obtained at a good restaurant; and there are many to be found in Marseilles, as clean as they are cheap. The Captain, who insisted upon our all being there with them—a united company—took his place at the head of the table; while Martha, equally anxious to begin her duties properly, sat at the foot. There was an entire absence of any frivolity or nonsense, yet a brisk cheerfulness reigned at the feast of this rather singular wedding party; and, after Nelson and I had each made a small appropriate speech, the Captain surpassed himself, we thought, in an evidently studied reply. Said he:

“As I stand here on this the happiest day of my life, looking straight down the grandest street in Europe within a few yards of the sea, it is easier to forget the past than it is to ignore those aspirations concerning the future which the prospect of a long voyage always gives rise to in me. ‘Let the dead past bury its dead’ is a very good motto.

“To look back is to become a pillar of salt. Nevertheless, it would be most ungracious of me were I on this particularly memorable occasion to omit paying—or expressing my inability to repay—my great debt of thankfulness and gratitude to the dear affectionate friends to whom we two orphan souls owe our mutual introduction. Speaking for my wife as well as myself, I offer you, our dear Mr. and Mrs. Glenn, the homage and affectionate feelings that have grown up like twin plants in your sweet home at St. Barnabé and are now blossoming in these hearts of ours. May your own joys grow likewise

with the ripening of your clever and amiable children in the atmosphere of brotherly and sisterly love to which we two have so long been accustomed. To you, Mr. Nelson, we wish a long, patriarchal life of peace in return for all the good you have done for others. Our wedding day is a long one. Like the first day of creation, it has a morning and an evening, between which periods great developments can take place. Now is our morning; our evening shall be when I meet my beloved again at the altar of our Holy Church in London. Until then we will commend one another to God's protection."

Everybody was affected; and more than one tear mingled with the wine as our glasses clinked in honour of the Captain's eloquent toast. His neatly worded speech—none the less appreciated on account of Martha having assisted to compose it—had the effect of endearing him to us more than ever before.

After the dinner was over, the children went back home in charge of the sister; and Lucy took Martha in a cab to the ship, while Nelson and I accompanied the Captain to the bureau of the Messageries Maritimes, where a few heavy packages lay waiting to be conveyed on board. These were some rifles of a French make—in fact, the identical samples that had erstwhile been ineffectually handled by Ben Maka. For now that there was no secret mission to hamper the Captain, there was no need for him to dissimulate or abstain from offering the manufactures of his adopted country side by side with British or Belgian goods. Moreover, existing circumstances indicated the probability of the sale of the former being stopped by the British Government; while, on the other hand, the French people

were notoriously and unanimously in sympathy with Arabi Pacha in his seditious efforts; and Ferdinand de Lesseps, with others, co-operated to impede those steps that were being taken for the restitution of Tewfik Pacha's vice-regal authority. As we drove off with the baggage, a boy stood on the pavement and respectfully saluted us by removing his cap. He was the little Garot.

Before scaling the sheer black walls of the noble vessel, our emigrant was required to exhibit his papers. These were all *en règle*, including a permit from the Ministry of the Interior, without which the customs officers would not only have prevented the shipment of the fire-arms, but arrested their owner. At length they were deposited in his cabin, and I promenaded the upper deck a while with Lucy. Nelson, who had discovered an old acquaintance, in the person of the chief engineer, went down below to inspect some improvements in the machinery. And so the newly-married couple were left *enfin seul!* leaning over the rail apparently watching the boatmen in their task of disconnecting the last cable. But actually they were gazing into each other's eyes while the cord that united their hearts was being severely tightened by the strain put upon it. Anon we all met again at the top of the ladder after the signal had been given for it to be removed, and we three elders took leave of the interesting *voyageur* with ever so many cordial expressions teeming with sympathy and hope. And before Martha had disengaged herself from the Captain's embrace we witnessed their last kiss—a deliberate and shameless act. And why not? Her head was thrown back whilst a ray from the setting sun glinted across the pure

white forehead and tinged with gold the bonny brown hair :

“ . . . the red was on her lips,
And the love-light in her eye.”

It was a flash of the same strong yet subtle current—sometimes as cruel as electrocution—which I had noticed upon the occasion of their being introduced to each other.

There was no lack of firmness in Martha's step as she alighted and came to our side on the brink of the wharf. Presently we three purposely retreated a few paces in the rear; thus leaving her figure standing boldly out for her husband to distinguish as the distance between them grew rapidly greater, until two fluttering white handkerchiefs were the only traces left of the pair of lovers who had once resolved never to separate “until death us do part.” It took but a few minutes; then the dissolving view vanished.

Meanwhile we had been regarding Martha exclusively, and commenting on the romantic aspect of the scene. Nelson, moved by pity and admiration for the bride-widow, as he styled her, said :

“Did one ever behold such a perfect match between manly vigour and feminine beauty? Look at that expression of dignified resolution which she has acquired from him, and think how his features softened into a resemblance of hers during his illness. They would die for each other, I firmly believe.”

In which opinion we acquiesced.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GANTLET

THE beneficent physiological law under which the loss of an organ or a member is largely compensated for by an increase of power in those which the body retains was illustrated in the history of the Klek *ménage*. No sooner was the Captain gone than Madame Otto Klek assumed her title; replacing the erstwhile familiar "Martha," or "Miss Vernet," or "Mademoiselle," with a personality of more importance. It must not be inferred that she forgot herself, or put on airs, or behaved unbecomingly towards those who had cared for her. On the contrary, she was increasingly affectionate and desirous of retaining her old name, at any rate with us. We had our reasons, however, for preferring exactitude in the matter. When driving back to St. Barnabé, after seeing the last of the Captain—Nelson taking leave of us at the Quai du Vieux-Port—I sat on the box with the driver, as I guessed that both Lucy and Martha would enjoy, or be the better for, an unrestrained cry. And it was so; a kind of turning-point from which their thoughts drifted in anticipation towards the home-coming—a period variously estimated, but not exceeding three months, during which ever so many things besides white crocheted quilts would have to be made and bought. Nor would the absentee ever

have occasion to complain like the Psalmist, "I am clean forgotten like a dead man out of mind," to judge from the ream of foreign note-paper which we stopped to procure on the way.

Reduced in numbers, sad, though not unnerved, we made a rather sorry supper. As an antidote to dull melancholy, I promoted a little lively conversation; although a fountain of humour would have been as much out of place as at a funeral. Still, we managed to extract a few drops from that never-failing source—the idiosyncrasy, ignorant and impudent, of domestic servants.

However humble one's position, the relation of our own *impressions de voyage* through life, added to what we may have gleaned from others by the way, without having recourse to invention, should suffice to make a book. Whether the record abides in form of scraps within the family circle, or flies off at a tangent into public spheres, depends more upon the editor than the reporter. A good cook will not despair, even at a total lack of nutritive food-stuff, but rather rejoice at the opportunity for showing his talent; like the *cordon bleu* who composed a renowned menu, and made a dinner out of nothing but his master's hat and gloves!

Lucy had inherited a scrap-book from her grandfather. It had been re-bound more than once, so as to include fresh leaves, and contained a number of literary odds and ends, together with aboriginal notes and queries. To-night she got it out of her wardrobe, and, laying it on the table, persuaded Martha to inscribe a few of our additional contributions after this style:

"Having first replied by letter to our advertisement for man and wife as cook and gardener, a

person called and rang at the front bell. I went to peep through the grill before causing the door to be opened, and inquired, 'Who are you?' 'I am Madame Fournier, your correspondent the cook out of place, whom you have not yet the honour to know,' was the ready answer. The same advertisement elicited this artless introduction of the question of encumbrance: 'We regret we cannot send our own portraits, but we enclose our two dear children. The girl resembles her father, but the boy is unlike either of us.' Both were pictures of ugly coarse babies, and disgustingly photographed."

"Another, a gardener, presented as a sole testimonial his soldier's *livret*, which proved that he had duly served as a cornet, was of good character, but knew neither how to read or write, or calculate (*compter*) or swim."

" '*Ça ne fait rien,*' said our daily gardener whom I found under a bush sleeping off the effects of drink, 'I will come on Sunday and work the time I have lost.' "

"This bit of French-Irishism came straight out of the kitchen:

" 'You see this invisible patch the snob has put in my shoe, Marie? '

" 'Yes, I see it, Jean. How much did he charge? '

" 'Two francs. *Incroyable,—ne c'est pas?* '

" ' *Je le crois.* ' "

"The following turns the tables:

" 'And what do you do with the fruit when it is so abundant and cheap as not to pay for the taking to market? ' I inquired of one.

" ' *Le faire brûler, Monsieur,* ' was the gardener's reply."

“What *burn* it? Why I never heard of such a thing!” I exclaimed.

“But I have, Father,” said little Nova, who was at my side; “it means distilling.”

The native dictionary confirmed her; but my French-and-English one (which alone I had hitherto used) was at fault.

It was past nine when we went to bed that night. But our lights had not all been distinguished when a ring at the gate bell startled us. The *bonne*, who was still about below, answered, bringing in a letter that was addressed to the Captain. The bearer of it, she said, was waiting for a reply.

“He can’t have one to-night,” we heard Martha say loudly over the stairs, up which the servant had not ventured while the stranger remained at the door. I had my suspicions and fears; but neither were allayed or confirmed, while the incident, undeveloped, shared the general repose. This was far from perfect, however, for I had very little sleep. My wife, too, was disturbed, the weather having changed into a gusty, wet, and tempestuous storm. A shutter carelessly left unfastened kept on banging; and our cat, who had forgotten that her lover preferred to meet her by moonlight alone, sang a cracked and erring treble to the diapason of the wind on the chimney-pots and pipes. More than once Lucy remarked:

“What a night! Pity the poor Captain!”

In the morning my suspense was put an end to by the arrival of a second letter. Thereupon Martha took us into her confidence as usual, and laid both the documents on the table. Her imperturbability as she stood by regarding us—while the wife and I positively knocked our heads together in our eager-

ness to scan these extraordinary communications—was, to my mind, strikingly comparable to the air of indifference assumed by Captain Klek when in custody of the police, as I first beheld him. The vital energy so perfectly distributed is *mens sana in corpore sano*. Neither do the resources physical or mental suffer from an overdraft. Passion is held in check by adherent resolute power; an ideal humanity is exemplified.

The first letter was nothing less surprising than a challenge to a duel; the second contained abusive threats and an impudent demand for blackmail. Each letter was signed in both names—"Ben Maka" and "Vilerot." The latter individual was, in fact, the person who brought the missives and now stood waiting at the back door while we discussed the contemptible productions, which, translated, read thus :—

"To MONSIEUR THE CAPTAIN OTTO KLEK, at St. Barnabé.

"March, 1882.

"Sir,

"As the intimate friend of Monsieur Ben Maka, I have the honour to demand on his behalf reparation for the great injuries you have done him; and, accordingly, I invite you and him to an encounter of arms. For the rendezvous, I am entirely at your disposal.

"Your servant,

"DE VILEROT.

"Seen and approved—Ben Maka.

"Communications may be addressed to the Café de Marseilles."

“ TO CAPTAIN OTTO KLEK.

“ Since you are too cowardly to accept my challenge, you must pay the costs by giving the bearer of this letter a thousand francs. (Fcs. 1,000.) It is but small recompense for the injuries you have done me. Should you decline this alternative, your life will be in danger, as well as that of the woman you now call your wife !

“ BEN MAKÀ.

“ Seen and approved—De Vilerot.”

CHAPTER XVIII

HONOUR AND ARMS

LUCY's face assumed a puzzled expression, in which curiosity merged into vexation and anger as she threw up her arms and said :

“ Confound their impudence ! ”

Martha was standing with her hands behind her looking out of the back window. I rose and stamped my feet with rage, declaring that I would go at once, secure the villain, and send for the police. But she, turning round, coolly put her hand on my arm and said :

“ My dear Mr. Glenn, I am resolved and prepared to deal with the matter as Otto would have done. You know that the miserably incompetent and mercenary police would let Garot slip away ; and the incarceration of this wretch of a confederate would be no sort of gratification to us. We should be bothered and obliged to go to court again and again, and have to spend our money as if we were on our defence. Supposing that a conviction were obtained, Vilerot's punishment would be very light, and by a ticket-of-leave curtailed. So that, in all probability, we should be the greatest sufferers to the end, and all our plans about going to London would be upset.”

“ What would you do, then ? ” my wife asked emphatically, while peering into the girl's eyes and fancying she could divine their meaning. “ Parley—

come to terms—satisfy them? Ignore them we dare not.”

“No, I will give them just the satisfaction they ask for, and put Garot out of his misery.”

“You don’t mean to say you would fight a duel?” I questioned with incredulity.

“Certainly,” she replied; “it is the only effectual way of putting a stop to the infamous ways of these wicked men.”

“Oh, Martha!” exclaimed Lucy beseechingly, “pray don’t entertain such Quixotic notions. Surely we can afford to give them some money which may serve to keep the wolves at bay until we go from here next week.”

“And would you—” demanded Martha with warmth, “could you stoop to do that? If we were to do so, they would increase their demands, and the dangerous predicament our lives are in would be made worse than ever.”

“Listen,” said I, interposing, “there must be a way out of the straits!”

“It must be a straight way to suit me,” she rejoined, interrupting. “Let me go and tell him simply,” she urged, “that the challenge is accepted; and then I will take the place of my husband—as I have a right to do. Mr. Nelson will not refuse consent, if I appoint the meeting at his place. Do you think he will?”

I remained silent—only raising my hand to check her impetuosity, and, by a nod of the head, indicating to Lucy that all would come right presently. But Martha left the room precipitately with an air of determination to cease expostulation. Lucy followed, and persuaded her to return and hear what I had to say.

" They want money," I argued.

" Which they shall never extract from me," interpolated the fair duellist.

" Neither from us," I added, looking for confirmation towards Lucy, who, I was gratified to observe, appeared to be changing her mind. She said :

" Now I am inclined to endorse a policy of resistance. We must have protection from these insulting threats, or they will lead to murderous attacks worse than the last."

" In that first letter they pretend," said I, " that Garot's honour has been injured in a way that can only be repaired by an appeal to combat ; the second letter we will have nothing to do with. Let us take them at their word by accepting the challenge and meeting them just as Martha proposes. I feel convinced that it will be the best course to play the game of bluff ; for they seem to be a pair of arrant pluckless sneaks not likely to stand their ground. Only, allow me to treat with Vilerot as second. It would be *infra dig* and out of chivalry order for Martha to appear at this stage. Besides, I can easier rebut any inquiries respecting the absence of the Captain himself."

" Very well," said the principal person concerned, " I agree." And her spirits rose with an exalting flush as she added : " Excuse me, I will run up-stairs and be looking out of window just to see how he takes it ! "

Lucy wavered, but was less anxiously agitated than I had expected. She accompanied me to the door, saying :

" It is a farce ; they never can be serious. God grant it may all fall through."

"Monsieur de Vilerot?" I said, addressing the seedy and insolent freemason. To which he replied, lifting his hat and describing with it a semi-circle in the air before bowing:

"Monsieur Glenn, at your service."

"You should know, as a man of title," I began, "that in an affair of honour like this witnesses are necessary. And also it is usual to draw up a *procès verbal* before the rendezvous. However, if you and I are content, nobody else will object to small omissions. The whole affair is irregular. Give yourself the trouble to enter."

He complied, and we took our seats *vis-à-vis* as I resumed:

"I am charged to accept on the part of my friend Captain Klek; and since you have been good enough to leave to him the selection of the ground, I have to propose Endoume, before the bastide of Le Tonneau, where there is a piece of vacant land convenient, and we can obtain all the assistance we may require from the proprietor, whom you recollect you accompanied when you visited us in the summer."

"Monsieur le Capitaine—is he here?" Vilerot inquired nonchalantly.

"That is not our business," I answered. "In any case, whether he appears on the scene or not, your friend shall get what he asks; I will guarantee that much."

The man's visage shone and his eyes brightened as he said:

"*Bien entendu*; either the one thing or the other; money or combat—compensation or revenge. But," and here his face changed and his voice dropped, "tell me—is it a police trap you are setting?"

"Not at all," I replied with emphasis. "I pledge you my word that we shall not communicate with the police. If any of the agents do find their way up there, they will not be of our fetching. This engagement is strictly between ourselves."

"Ah!" was the satisfied comment of the negotiator. And I searched his eyes for their expression, but they failed to betray his thoughts. Nevertheless, I felt convinced that I had succeeded in creating within his brain the impression which would best suit our purpose—namely, that we no more intended, seriously, to carry out the engagement to combat than did he or his principal. Measuring us by his own standard, we were all humbugs alike. "Therefore," thought he, "they must eventually square us to the tune of 1,000 francs—or something less!" A moment's silence ensued. Meantime I had had writing-materials put on the table. Then we each took a pen and paper; and between us the following memorandum was composed:—

"Article 1.—Pistols.

„ 2.—Twenty Paces.

„ 3.—One shot.

„ 4.—Endoume.

„ 5.—To-morrow at 9 a.m."

To this we appended the date and our two signatures; then rose, exchanged copies, and ceremoniously parted.

If one of us felt inclined to laugh at the seeming farce, it was not I.

"It is evident," said I to the ladies as they came forward, each with a different hope, "they are not serious on the point of duelling; because the

questions of engaging a doctor and furnishing weapons were never alluded to."

"He was afraid of incurring needless expense," suggested Lucy.

"Nevertheless," I urged, "I think we had better act in downright earnest; and, in order to make an indelible impression, I propose we take the thick dog-whip with us; then, if Garot turns up but refuses to fight, Martha can thrash him soundly."

This was approved, and I went straight over to see Nelson.

It was very likely that the blackguards in question saw me come to town in a cab, which stopped at the Pharmacie Anglaise in the Rue de la Republique, and afterwards drove to Endoume and back; but they could not have known that I had engaged a doctor for the dramatic occasion. Neither were they quite sure that their enemy himself would be absent, as I learnt upon my return home that while Vilerot waited in the kitchen for our decision he questioned the servant as to whether Captain Klek had already left Marseilles or not. She, possessing few conscientious scruples, and having a confessor of the Laxist order, gave the man she detested to understand that at that moment the bride and bridegroom were both of them in the house. It transpired, too, some years after that, in return for the tip we gave the young Garot outside the bureau of the Messageries Maritimes, the lad purposely omitted to watch and report to his father whether the Captain did actually embark that afternoon or return to St. Barnabé in company with us.

It is easy to imagine the feelings of the two bosom friends. They thought, no doubt, that, the Captain being away, any reparation they might obtain could

only be of one kind. Had they suspected the truth, the letters would never have been presented. Moreover, Garot must have had his misgivings, and a dread of that recognition in the open streets which might have forced the hands of the police, compelling them to arrest him. Yet the seductive glamour of a thousand francs, or even half that sum—for he would not be too exacting, above all from a lady!—like a deadly fascinating charm enhanced the purely vindictive motive. And after all it was worth the risk to be able to stand treat—as he intended—to those indulgent *agents de police* who hung about the back entrance of the “Petit Voyageur.”

CHAPTER XIX

EQUAL RIGHTS

THERE was no use in trying to dissuade Martha. She was of age, and her own mistress now. She knew that her skill with the revolver, great as it was, could not protect her from her assailant's weapon unless she should happen to be the first to fire. The risk in any case was a terrible one. The only chance left of its being averted lay in the probability of Garot's shirking the ordeal. Nobody believed in the genuineness of the challenge. Such a test was far too heroic for the swaggering threatener. Bravery and gallantry have long since ceased to characterise those highwaymen and footpads who use the formula, "Your money or your life!" The profession has degenerated into burking and garotting. The superior woman that Martha was did too much honour to the villain to descend to his level, even in accepting a duel with him. We had not failed to urge this view. But her answers were to the effect that Captain Klek himself first proposed to settle the dispute by that means. Had he been at home now, he would assuredly have stood up. When there was neither protection nor redress to be obtained through the law, private individuals were justified—aye, compelled—like public bodies, to defend themselves. She had confidence in her power to put her opponent *hors de combat* without

killing him; while as regarded her own person she had not a particle of fear. But, after stoically balancing the probabilities and comparing the high price of peace on earth with the gift of perfect peace in the life to come, she trusted her confessor for the rest, and was indifferent if not happy. While admitting that it was a barbarous method of administering a drastic remedy, she argued that it was not more desperate a performance than that of the doctor who experiments on himself with deadly poisons in the hope of utilising them in the cure of disease.

"There seems to be no disgrace attached to duelling in France," remarked Lucy after a thoughtful pause that evening. Martha was silent.

"Between Frenchmen duels are of frequent occurrence," I observed; "and, according to the best authorities, only a tithe of their number are widely reported. Between women duels are rare, but not unknown. A celebrated one at Bordeaux in '66 was discovered through one of the combatants being badly wounded. The result of their prosecution was fifteen days' imprisonment apiece."

"I have heard of boxing fights between the opposite sexes at large fairs," said Lucy; "but I think a duel conducted under equal terms between a man and a woman would be generally regarded as unfair; and the man, if he should conquer, would be condemned for it and expected to do nothing less than immolate himself."

"In suicide," I added, "that would be the unanimous verdict, the voice of nature dominating that of reason."

This aroused Martha, who exclaimed, "Then Nature is unjust!"

"No doubt about it," I conceded; "she is cruel, and never forgives."

"More's the pity for man," rejoined my wife. "Ill-used women get the larger share of the world's commiseration; but they ought not to monopolise it, because there are many men who deserve to be included in the same. I have in mind the spitefully domineering influence, if not brutality, which some strong, big women exercise over their feebler, yet exemplary, spouses. It may be enough to crush them body and spirit, yet Nature forbids them to appeal. Beneath the feminine human foot the masculine worm may not turn."

"But," Martha contended with considerable warmth, "in the defence of his wife's honour as well as his own, a man is encouraged with applause to use his utmost resources, even to the extent of killing the enemy in a duel; and that is just what occurred here in Marseilles four years ago, when Clovis Hugues, the deputy, slew his man in the woods of Monredon, at the end of that lovely valley La Panouse. And yet, you know, at the trial in this city he was acquitted. I maintain that a woman is entitled to the same consideration, or indulgence."

"Not if she is married," objected Lucy.

"But suppose her husband is absent," urged Martha, with an assuring smile. "And suppose they are both the subject of attacks."

"Ah, then I think she is warranted in taking up the cudgels," conceded Lucy, amid the general acquiescence.

Nelson was confident of a successful issue in her favour. Instead of taking exception to her selection of the place of rendezvous, he seemed pleased. As to the possibility of his having to suffer prosecu-

tion for permitting or assisting at a duel on his premises, he scouted it, and laughed as he declared his readiness to risk any or everything in the cause of the fair, old as he was. He was naturally excited at the turn events had taken, and sent word that he should be up in arms all the night through.

Poor Lucy, her fears were painful to bear at first, so that she came in for the greater part of the sympathy expressed. But, after a bit, I was astonished at her increasing fortitude, which was founded on her detestation of the scoundrels who perpetrated these murderous outrages, and now could dare to come and threaten further violence to their lenient victims. This reflection, together with the sight of Martha's unerring aim as she practised for the last time—sending the projectile clean through the sleeve of an old coat hung on a tree twenty paces off—animated her, and stirred up that reserve of courage which my wife, in common with most women, possessed.

It was arranged that I should precede the ladies, and call for the doctor in town, on my way to Endoume in the morning. In fact, as the business agent, or rather stage manager of the performance, I had plenty to occupy me for the rest of the evening; while for the ladies the paramount question of *toilette* intuitively asserted itself. Such a state of mind on the eve of an event so tragic is not peculiar to the feminine character. Persons of both sexes, whose chances of survival were desperately fewer than those of our favourites in this case, dressed themselves with scrupulous nicety just before going to the scaffold. In one instance a brand-new wooden leg was ordered and adjusted for the occasion. But that was by a murderess—

Mrs. Manning, in 1849. The same idea is indicated by the French (pagan) custom of attiring a corpse in its very best suit of apparel—including jewelry—and burying it thus. To say the least of it, it is a polite tribute to Nature for us to return the earthly tabernacle decently and in order, with compliments and thanks for the loan of it!

CHAPTER XX

VOILA L'AFFAIRE !

IT was not my habit to shave. Had it been otherwise, the razor might have left its mark in red upon my face that never-to-be-forgotten morning when, during a summer toilet, my teeth chattered as after a cold tub in January. But such a lack of spirit was quite unbecoming in the presence of the weaker (?) sex. Being myself neither the principal nor even a second in this affair, nervousness was inexcusable, and I had no right to exhibit unmanliness which might have proved infectious. The brandy bottle I detested, and scorned the suggestion to get it out of my wife's wardrobe. But, upon catching a glimpse of my pale face in the glass, I regretted there was no rouge-powder about the place.

Meantime the household was astir, and everything moving in its wonted groove. The children, rejoicing at the unexpected holiday, talked a little louder than usual, but not enough to drown the conversation between their mother and their governess, whose topic was manifested by the query :

"What shall I put on ?"

"Did you speak to me ?" I inquired across the corridor.

"No," replied my wife, "but you may come and give your opinion."

To this flattering invitation I demurred, saying :

"It doesn't matter what you wear, barring the white feather."

"No fear!" and a laugh indicated an enviable state of mind, which, happily, thereupon took possession of me.

The two cabs I had ordered over-night promptly appeared at the gate. I started in one alone, the ladies following in the other; and at a quarter before the hour fixed nobody was missing at Endoume except the enemy. Those of us who had all along expected a hoax began to prophesy. But to our surprise the two men entered punctually as the clock struck nine.

We all stood up and bowed stiffly. Nelson was the first to speak.

"You have come to meet Captain Otto Klek?"

"It is this way," began Vilerot in an excited yet insinuating manner—"a question of indemnity. We estimate it at a thousand francs. But if that is too high, it is for you to make a reasonable offer. For, look you——"

Martha, advancing, cut this short by saying, very deliberately and in a clear voice :

"I am the wife of Captain Klek, and in our name I offer you the reparation which you demand in this your first letter."

With gloved hand she pointed to the letter on the table between two cases of pistols lying open. Her demeanour was altogether as calm as if she were merely stating a problem to her pupils. She wore a serge travelling-dress with a sailor collar to it, and a white straw hat trimmed with dark blue and turned up on one side, thus showing her perfect features, which at that moment every eye was riveted on.

No objection was raised to her statement. There was a lull.

"Take your choice of weapons," said I, addressing Garot, who promptly and politely bowed as he replied, "Ladies first" (*Place aux dames !*). Then he staggered, and, letting his hands drop, his hat rolled on to the floor. As he stooped to pick it up Vilerot caught him by the arm, and they conferred for half a minute together, during which time we were all completely silent. It was the crucial point. Not that Martha or her supporters were likely to budge from the sternly critical position they had adopted.

The white-livered braggart and assassin was taken aback. He had conjectured, guessed, and suspected a dozen forms of surprise that might have awaited him; but the idea of being obliged to shoot at a beautiful woman had probably never occurred to him. Here was a nonplus for him and his henchman. That very morning they had verified—as they thought—the Captain's departure; therefore they must have anticipated a fiasco for the duel, and reckoned upon receiving their own alternative—namely, a cash bribe. Punishment, in the shape of a hiding from Madame Klek's male friends, they had boldly risked, intending, no doubt, to defend themselves *à outrance*; and most likely carrying knives for such a desperate purpose.

Garot's flabby cheeks turned red and his eyes green as he saw Martha move and take up from the table, instead of a pistol, the heavy-thonged dog-whip. He realised his predicament in an instant, and his mind was made up, for I heard him say to Vilerot :

"They will call me a coward if I fight the woman; and if I do not she will punish me as one . . . *Allez !*"

Which word of command he himself obeyed mechanically, briskly; and Vilerot (not being himself the principal) followed with characteristic alacrity. Martha thereupon replaced the whip and took the pistol nearest to her, while Garot lifted one from the other case. The doctor—a stout and important-looking personage—made an impatient movement as if he were used to this sort of thing, and his time were more precious than the fee of two hundred francs I had paid him, or the extension of a life—or two! This impatience seemed to be communicated to Garot and Vilerot, who were both quite sober and fairly well dressed, although their coats did not fit well. And when the former removed his coat and exposed the sleeves of his shirt, they did not serve as a good advertisement for the washerwoman that his wife was:

Now all the party concerned, with the exception of Lucy and Nelson's *femme de ménage*, proceeded to the plateau in front of the house. Scarcely a sound (other than that of our solemn footsteps) disturbed the ethereal atmosphere. But as I walked close behind the chief opponent I fancied I heard the pulsations of his heart thumping inside him.

Taking Martha by the hand, Nelson conducted her to the smoothest part, whereon a slender upright stick indicated the *point de départ*, and Garot likewise went there, spontaneously, and placed himself back to back against Martha, just as if they both rehearsed the performance together. These details were executed so neatly and quickly that one had no time for suspense, or tardy repentance. The business-like manner of the doctor also, who opened his tray of instruments and bandages, inspired a certain amount of confidence and a practical resolution to

do one's duty, now that the worst had come to the worst.

Just at that moment there rushed into my brain—or through it—one of the ugliest thoughts I ever had. It was accompanied with a profound remorseful regret that I had not let it in before it was too late to act upon. It was like the voice of God to Cain, prompting the self-searching question, “What will you say or do to excuse yourself should Martha be killed?” The only thing that came to my relief was Nelson's confident assurance that she was bound to conquer. I clung to this hope with a blind faith, postponing a categorical answer.

It was my duty, as master of the ceremonies, to give the signal, which I did by firing into the air. The next moment two similar reports like a double echo reverberated simultaneously over the peaceful valley, and one of the combatants fell—it was the man. Swiftly the doctor darted towards the prostrate body, while Lucy and I sped like twin arrows to a target, which was Martha leaning upon the arm of her second. She, alas! had been struck. Our hearts were in our mouths.

“Nothing serious,” said Nelson, four times over in as many seconds to assuage our fears. We hurried into the house. Lucy and Martha retired together with the woman; but my wife returned a minute after, saying that the wound was in the upper part of the arm—a very slight affair.

Martha wished to ignore it altogether; but we soon had the doctor's opinion as he looked in directly afterwards.

“*Rien!*—nothing. A few drops of *eau phéniquée* and a strip of *taffetas*. *Voilà l'affaire!* The dress-maker can do the rest.”

"And he?" she inquired very anxiously.

"Outside the ribs," replied the doctor. "It is not dangerous; but a large flesh wound; and the man is exhausted, for he has evidently passed through a *mauvais quart d'heure*!"

With that the doctor accepted a large bottle of smelling salts, and left us in order to go and direct Garot's removal. Nelson likewise assisted, but I was forbidden to leave the ladies.

"Let us go—let us go now," urged Lucy with trembling impatience as she gathered up her things after having seen to the dressing of the heroine's arm.

The erstwhile patient went in search of Nelson, our host, who met her half-way and came along talking animatedly about the advisability of an immediate departure from Marseilles—which was exactly what had been arranged between us—and promising to see to everything else himself. Of course the hour of the train was a secret; but we confided it to him; and the disguise he should wear when he appeared on the station was whispered into my ear.

"Good-bye, dear Mr. Nelson," said Martha, regarding him with a soulful expression through a veil of tears. "You have indeed been a friend to-day and ever since I first saw you." Then, turning to us, she took a hand of each one and joined them, all three, together as she said: "And I say the same to you all, let me thank you most gratefully."

"Adieu! my dear young lady," responded Nelson with a choking voice; "may you always find yourself with friends, and never feel the regret I have often experienced lately, that your own parents are not present to behold such a daughter."

CHAPTER XXI

BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS

"THERE is beauty in the dance." Yes, and relief and recreation to the extent of infatuation sometimes. The practice is so old and universal that any ideas of its beauty that might have been possessed by the original devotees of dancing, if we knew them, would be found to be quite out of keeping with present-day standards; although, in effect, perhaps none the less humanising. When the late Charles H. Spurgeon said that he did not disapprove of dancing where the sexes were separated, he was understood to practically condemn the habit *in toto*.

The dance, not the wild expression of the emotions by spasmodic and irregular movements of the limbs in the air; nor yet the precisely regulated drill which forms part of the physical culture lesson at the Board School; but graceful rhythmic motions of the human body, the sight of which pleases without shame—such dancing may be witnessed in the streets of London almost any night of the week, excepting in the winter and on Sundays, under Spurgeon's own conditions.

A picture—and in my opinion a grand one—might be painted of such a scene¹ as was presented one

¹ A similar spectacle is described in rapturous phraseology by the late Rev. H. R. Haweis in his book, *Music and Morals*.

evening in the spring of 1882. It was formed around a common piano-organ played by a smiling Italian in a London by-street—a *cul-de-sac*—just off Oxford Street. In fact, a ballet procession was there being conducted by a terpsichore of eight years! The dozen performers all appeared to be younger still. They were rehearsing only; that was evident by the lack of uniformity or harmony in the style and colours of their dresses. More than one of the mites was skirtless and had to pluck her bit of chemise that protruded below the dirty little boneless corset in order to festoon in imitation of her leader. Others of the *corps de ballet* had anticipated the present ultra hygienic fashion by discarding both boots and shoes as well as their stockings or socks. It had been better if they had all done likewise, and thus prevented the frequent complaints of the *nu-pieds* among them, "You trod on my toes."

There were many onlookers whose assistance was indispensable. For although the children would have enjoyed their amusement as much—perhaps more—had there been no other spectators than the leader of the orchestra, whenever he ceased to play the little ones looked appealingly to the crowded appreciative audience for them to pay the piper. This done, he recommenced turning the handle so as to produce the measure which accorded best with their movements, his head and foot beating the same time.

Among the generous contributors was a tall, well-dressed, handsome lady, who carried a very small white Maltese dog. His overstrung nerves were so affected by the music that he quite unexpectedly set up a discordant howling. Amid the

general laughter which ensued the lady was obliged to retire, while the low but talented infants resumed their pretty yet serious dancing.

There was a large well-stocked pastrycook's shop close by in the main thoroughfare. Thither went the dog of his own accord directly he was set down. The lady followed; and, while he was kept waiting with his beseeching eyes upturned for his usual five o'clock biscuit, she selected a trayful of cakes and had them taken by the porter round the corner, with explicit instructions as to their distribution—one to each of the juvenile dancers, and one to their indefatigable musical conductor. That done, the benefactress helped herself, and afterwards *toutou*. The lady had seated herself at a little marble-topped table when, five minutes later, the porter with his empty tray under his arm returned and stood breathlessly before her.

"Why, whatever is the matter?" she naturally inquired. His somewhat incoherent explanation was that he had been the harbinger of trouble rather than a messenger of peace and plenty. For as soon as he had made known the object of his mission the music and dancing stopped, and the organist quickly absconded with the largest of the cakes—at which the children grabbed ravenously like hungry cats at raw meat. Finally he, the bearer of the lady's gifts, was knocked down by some bullies, as if he had been a thief!

"Come with me," said she, rising with an energetic expression on her benignant face, and quitting the shop, the porter following. At the same moment a policeman hurried across from the opposite side of the road and betook himself to the scene of the *mêlée* round the corner.

There the ballet scene had shifted, and was replaced by a veritable pandemonium. Children (more like fiends) were quarrelling and frantically screaming and clawing over the few scraps of pastry that remained, while miniature duels were being fought through jealousy, greed, and spiteful anger; passions that had been let loose into this little quadrangular section of London life by one generous—but misplaced—act of kindness. The raging contest spread from the imps upward, and downward, to the very devils themselves, as the hag-like denizens of the surrounding attics and cellars came out and took part in the fray, until the solitary but sturdy-looking representative of the law's severity burst in upon them. Then, by quick degrees, all this infernal ugliness disappeared, leaving him there alone, excepting the innocent cause of all the turmoil, who stood rapt in amazement at her own folly and repeating to herself the words of the song she had once heard sung at the Princess's Concert Rooms hard by the spot, "There's beauty in the Dance."—which phrase seemed now to be invested with a new meaning.

Slowly, as if sadly impressed, the lady went away, and after crossing Oxford Street she turned and called at a solicitor's office in Berners Street, where she gave in a card bearing the name of Madame Otto Klek.

We had been already a month back in our old home in Burton Crescent, and were not yet settled. Some things take much longer to reorganise than to disarrange. The congratulations of friends and acquaintances poured in a welcome shower upon us. The tradesmen, too, all fell into their wonted ways

promptly enough. The obtaining of suitable domestic servants was the greatest of Lucy's difficulties; all the rest were due to her helping Martha to furnish. "Shopping" was the comprehensive and almost invariable reply that I got to my nightly question, "What have you been doing to-day?"

So we grew accustomed to the situation, and accepted it as one does the postulate concerning a mathematical straight line, which it is impossible to make quite straight, excepting by the imagination.

"You can get all you want at the Stores," Lucy would say in excusing herself. To which I would fain reply:

"Yes, but you must take it with a great deal that you do not want; toilsome exertion getting from one department to another, sitting in a close atmosphere amid confusing noises and distractions; all tending to induce fatigue and proneness to catch colds and other ailments—your own in particular."

"Oh, I shall be all right presently, dear; don't worry; Martha feels it worse than I do," she would say.

"That accounts for her loss of appetite and early retirement every evening, I suppose."

"And she writes a great deal in her own room," added Lucy.

This dialogue was interrupted by a double knock of the postman who had brought the foreign mail. Martha flew to the door, and returned slowly with what she had been expecting pressed to her mouth like a cat with a freshly caught mouse. The letter was opened and read in our presence, but not all of it aloud. We gleaned that the Captain was fully occupied; more, however, with the intrigues of Arabi Pacha than with regular commerce. Yet

he looked forward to an early departure from Egypt, and anticipated the joys of meeting us all again.

This was the sum and substance of the portion allotted to us; the rest of the contents of the letter were not even to be guessed, and the next moment we two found ourselves alone.

My wife described the strangely-wedded couple's new flat on Haverstock Hill, how it would look when the furniture should be all in place. It was so nice that we regretted having renewed our lease instead of moving out of the old-fashioned house with its underground kitchens and three flights of stairs. It would certainly have been more economical and comfortable to return to a flat after a long absence.

"It was just the thing for the Kleks, only rather expensive," I suggested.

"But you do not know, dear," said Lucy with just a tinge of jealousy, "that they will most likely have enough to retire on."

"How do you know that?" I asked with surprise. "Has she ascertained her position from the solicitors?"

"Yes, to-day; it is over ten thousand pounds!" replied Lucy in a loud whisper, accompanied with a look of supreme gratification. "The money has been well invested in African mines, and the shares are increasing enormously in value."

CHAPTER XXII

A HEART BOWED DOWN

BUSINESS engrossed my daily attention. I had been absent from it more than eighteen months, and now it was my partner's turn to take a holiday.

My private affairs were consequently somewhat neglected. Nevertheless, friend Nelson's correspondence was duly honoured. He wrote pretty often to one or another of us. His first letter after our leaving Marseilles referred to the duel and its results, thus :

“Garot was removed to the hospital, and has recovered sufficiently to send me word to the effect that he intended to emigrate, but that he had had the misfortune to lose his purse containing all his money ! Would I kindly cause search to be made for it on the *champ de bataille* ? This suggestive message was brought to me by the redoubtable Vilerot. I purpose going myself to the Hôtel Dieu and giving Garot the hundred francs that Madame Klek left with me to dispose of charitably.”

And again, in a subsequent letter :

“Garot was very thankful, and actually apologised humbly for all the mischief he had done. It seems he has passed for a first-rate marksman in his time. He showed me his *livret*, and declares he will re-enlist and go out to Tonkin.

"I have got the young Garot a situation in the Rue Beauvau at the English shipbrokers'.

"P.S.—Vilerot, so Garot says, was the actual thief who robbed Martha of her brooch at the baths."

Our two dear children thrived in every way. We intended to put March into a good English boarding-school. Both of them continued to receive instruction from their governess, which position Martha never relinquished.

We have frequently reproached ourselves since then for not having insisted on putting an end to the engagement at an earlier period, for we could not fail to observe that she was overworking herself. Tuition, including piano lessons, occupied her mornings. The afternoons she spent in the everlasting shopping, together with my wife, or Nova, or both as companions. Needlework of various kinds was always in her hands. That order of things went on for weeks and weeks. But towards the end of the month of May she began to take occasional walks alone, "to air the dog," she would say, with a laugh which sounded too much affected for her. Everyone encouraged her to exercise in that way—which was as good as any other. In France a single young lady may never promenade alone. In England's metropolis it is still possible for a respectable woman to go out unaccompanied in the best streets without losing caste or men being permitted to molest and insult her gratuitously.

In those walks Martha seemed to be gathering subject-matter for her letters, which she must have written by the ream, as she was always very busy with her pen directly afterwards. Yet she was depressed and sighed often. Lucy tried hard to

cheer and reanimate her with assurances and grounds for hopefulness, thinking as I did that her low spirits were due to misgivings and fears concerning the Captain's safety and their ultimate union.

But Martha, assuming a coy and reserved manner, which was unusual for her and uncharacteristic, acquired a knack of averting a question or a straightforward answer, by raising a query; as when she would say in response to the inquiry, "What's the matter, dear?" "Do I look ill?" smile, and, without waiting for confirmation, change the topic. Once or twice Lucy told me that she despaired of getting at the girl, or regaining her complete confidence as in former days.

"There is something very mysterious in her behaviour," said Lucy, "as if—as if——"

We looked at each other without finishing the sentence, unable to grasp the notion that she was crazy; that, with so robust a character and such a magnificent frame, there could be anything wrong with Martha's mind. Still, her unaccountable ways were more than queer or eccentric.

She posted her own letters, and those she received from the Captain were carefully hidden or destroyed. For hours she would sit at work without speaking and blankly stare in one's face without apparent reason, as if her mind were absent wool-gathering. At length I took her to task.

"Why all this strange secrecy, Martha? Have you taken an aversion to us? If so, pray let us have an explanation."

She started, glanced from me to Lucy, and, bursting into tears like a repentant child, replied, with an appealing heartrending look:

"I cannot explain. I love you all as much as

ever. Do not ask me any more." Whereupon she slowly retired in painful silence and with her head bowed down.

Eventually we resolved to pretend to take no notice, while everything should be done to make her surroundings bright and cheerful.

Shortly after this episode we issued invitations for an "At Home," and nearly all of them were accepted. The consequent activity in the household seemed to do us all good, excepting Martha, whose actions continued to betray a preoccupied mind. Our fervent hope that she would be stimulated by the preparations and eventually assume, with credit to herself and us, the rôle attaching to her peculiar position, and become the belle of our party, was doomed to be disappointed. For we had the mortification to remark an increasing pallor in her face and the haggard eyes of insomnia. It was painfully hard to dissimulate our sorrow. Lucy suffered poignantly, and there were harrowing scenes between them when she implored Martha to disclose the trouble she was brooding over and invite relief. The only reply was, "Not yet."

It was to be inferred that between the half-married couple a misunderstanding had arisen, which she was unable or unwilling to explain, or even to admit, until the Captain should write again. Therefore we looked anxiously forward to the next mail from the East to elucidate the mystery. But the next mail yielded nothing for us. Another one would be due upon the night before our "At Home" was to take place, or rather the morning of that same day, it being a Monday—Monday, the 12th of June.

CHAPTER XXIII

TO OBLIGE A LADY

THE composer of the refrain to the old song which runs :

“ 'Tis love, oh ! 'tis love
That makes the world go round,”

should have known better, since Love is generally opposed to the monotony of days and seasons, and often engages impatiently in futile—and sometimes frantic—efforts to thwart the progress of Nature and natural events. Had the poet lived longer and studied the modern class of domestic servants, he would have seen that they alone possess the needful moral, if not physical, power to keep the ball a-rolling. Without their aid things would come to a standstill. A determined and comprehensive strike on their part would compel the fashionable world to stop—at home.

Chez nous affairs had come to such a pass, proving that neither love nor money is so indispensable as cooks and housemaids. Ours quarrelled, and both wanted to leave at once, more out of spite to one another than ill-feeling towards us. Lucy managed, by re-engaging one of them secretly, to save us from complete destitution; and, just in the nick of time, a middle-aged person called, applying for occasional work as cook. Her written testimonials appeared satisfactory, so she was received—as a godsend.

Mrs. Cawley understood her business, which was to make as much as possible out of the present engagement, leaving future ones to pay for themselves. That good old maxim of business men, "Each transaction must show a profit," has been discredited, if not abolished, by the mania for spending large sums in advertising; but women like Mrs. Cawley retain and worship it. Destined to serve us during one week only, that period sufficed for her to make her own terms with the mistress, and reciprocal ones with tradesmen and her companion, the housemaid. "One good turn deserves another," she was heard to say. Likewise—although it was very indelicate of her—"You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." And again, "'Measure for measure,' my dear, that's the play for me." But in practice she was wrong, as the immortal playwright's title implies just balances—the existence of compensating natural laws—an eternal fitness—not the dishonest substitution of "reputed" quarts and pints for "imperial" ones; which practice, under Mrs. Cawley's administration, was introduced by both the milkman and the grocer, while the butcher's make-weights grew bigger and consisted of lumps of unprofitable strange bones!

"I shall be so glad when our party is over," said Lucy, with a sigh. "If they all turn up, there will be just twenty, and some among them whom I have only seen once. For instance, those members of the Dialectical Society. I hope you won't begin discussing religion or science."

"You would not, surely, taboo psychology," I suggested playfully.

"Oh, horrors!—yes, I would," she replied. "That tall man whose face twitches like winking while he

is speaking. I wish you had not invited him, Peter. You really must entertain him with other subjects; try music."

"That's a happy thought, Lucy; I know his brother is very musical, and a High Churchman too."

"Ah! I recollect his venerable face, and wish he were coming instead," she rejoined, as we descended the stairs together towards the breakfast-room.

"What? Martha not down yet! Ah! here you are, dear" (kissing); "you are looking brighter, and will be brighter still to-night after the postman has called, I hope."

To which Martha replied with evident agitation:

"I hope so too; otherwise you will prefer me to absent myself entirely."

"Oh, pray don't think of such a thing; we shall all be less nervous then," said I, while trying to believe it myself.

"If you accomplish all the work you have undertaken to do between now and then, Martha, there will be no time for sighing, and your occupation will buoy you up," said Lucy.

"I must keep right away from the kitchen," observed Martha between two sips at a cup of coffee.

"That new cook of yours has been spinning a miserable yarn about her previous misfortunes and the plight her affairs are in. Do you know, she is a widow, and all her children have turned out bad. One is in jail; another is a costermonger. I suspect her of drinking too much."

"What a low creature!" my wife exclaimed in disgust. "But I dare not find fault with her until to-morrow. Oh, what ignominy we women are

obliged to put up with in order to get our housework done at all ! ”

“ I suppose that if it were not for Mrs. Grundy many ladies would try to do their own work,” I ventured.

“ I believe you, Peter. In fact, I was told at the registry office that in some houses—where the servants are well paid, too—they are kept only for show ; a maid to open the door, and one to bear the name of cook—though she only does the washing-up—while the employers, the ladies, do actually every bit of the work themselves ! ”

One could scarcely refrain from laughing at this view of social topsy-turvydom, and thinking of the many unsalaried German clerks in the city who do all the work of the office, while their principals are called to the bar—of the restaurant—to boast, and to discuss their profits, or bet, or make appointments for cricket, football or golf !

The postman passed our house that morning without leaving anything—a very rare occurrence—and Martha went about in abject misery. Oh, how we pitied her ; and, in trying to induce her to unburden her heart, we expressed our sympathy in various ways, speaking our minds freely in condemnation of the Captain for his cruel behaviour, whatever it might consist in. But when we ventured to predict a perfect reconciliation she uttered the word “ Impossible ! ” To sound the unfathomable depths of her sorrow and drag her out of herself we tried every conceivable plan ; but our efforts were as futile as attempting to open a Chubb’s lock without the key.

I did not go to the City that day. Everything was

in a state of preparedness for our "At Home," and Martha was persuaded to take a walk with the children. We learnt from them subsequently that they actually visited the new flat, and that Martha had left them in one room while she went into another and there cried bitterly. From the date of her completing the furnishing these symptoms—which resembled, as far as one could imagine, the effects of remorse on a condemned prisoner—had developed gradually, rendering her successively pensive, absent-minded, cold to her nearest friends, sleepless, wan, haggard.

"Most women have no characters at all," says Pope. Martha belonged to the few who possess inflexible wills superior to their physical powers. Hers being an exceptionably strong constitution, the struggle for the ascendancy was a stubborn and prolonged one. It was easy to guess that the love passion, which accounts for conduct far more extraordinary than Martha's, lay at the root of her distress. She was of a nature—like my wife—high above the reach of the slimy green claws of common jealousy. We concluded—and subsequent events proved that we were not far off the mark—that it was mortification, bitter disappointment through the discovery of an impediment to her complete union with the man of her choice; an impediment consisting of startling proofs of his moral incompetency or turpitude.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SECRET

LUCY's reception embraced a few of our relations who had been kept *au courant* of our movements while abroad. But the rest of our welcomed guests exacted a somewhat extensive account of our doings at Marseilles, to which the children contributed, affording a good deal of amusement. The duel incident had been kept a secret, and scrupulously out of the ears of journalists. But now the matter was in danger of leaking out. It would have been almost impossible to warn effectually March, a boy of seven; but his sister I cautioned shortly before the first arrivals.

"Nova darling."

"Yes, Father dear."

"What do people sometimes call a child's mouth?"

"Ugly,—pretty," she suggested.

"Those are adjectives; I want nouns," said I.

"A baby's mouth is compared to a rosebud, or a button-hole," said Nova, laughingly; "but they are little mouths, of course: I can't remember any names for a large mouth."

"Something ending—box," I prompted.

"Ah! yes, 'musical box'; that was what Captain Klek once called my mouth. And he said it was because it had two rows of white keys."

"Very good," I remarked, "and original. But I

was thinking of the term 'chatter-box.' The Captain's simile is better. Now, will you take care that nobody plays on those keys but yourself? Do you understand? I am afraid not; let me explain. We don't want you to speak about the duel to-night; and I know that you will, to please your parents, try to keep silent on that subject. But if any lady or gentleman should ask you questions, think before you answer, lest you should say too much."

"I will, Father dear," Nova replied; and the compact was sealed with a kiss.

After the lighting-up a truce seemed to have been tacitly convened between the forces militating against our domestic happiness. As we stood ready to receive our company I thought that since our wedding day my Lucy had never looked better in health nor handsomer. Her abundant soft fair hair, which on that occasion was hanging behind loosely over her shoulders, now crowned her head in glossy plaits. Her dress, made of the black Spanish lace that was once her mother's, was lined with blue silk; and the *décolleté* bodice favoured the display of the pearl necklace I gave her, supremely set on the natural wealth of woman with which she was endowed.

Lucy was quite equal to her duties; her mind was "at home," and found just the right word at the right moment for everyone. A gracious ease pervaded our little gathering. Nothing was out of place or lacking. The people paired well and mutually introduced themselves to one another, thus saving time and preventing awkwardness. During the conversation, as far as I could glean, the duel did not crop up; neither did the weather, nor

politics, nor personal ailments obtrude; nor was religion dragged into the arena. Among other topics the everlasting science of philology came to the fore. A gentleman who had invented a universal language surpassing Volapuk gave interesting examples; he showed us a complimentary letter that he had received from Professor Max Müller, likewise a copy of one he—the inventor—had written to Sir Isaac Pitman demonstrating a thousand different ways of spelling, phonetically, the word “scissors.”

Music’s charms attracted the better part of the salon; as it did also a knot of amateurs on the pavement outside; for the window was open, and the piano had been freshly tuned to the continental pitch, which favours middle-aged sopranos. The current chat comprised congratulations, compliments, and a few remarks about my looking rather the worse for the extended *congé*. The latter observations were made *sotto voce*, and failed to reach other ears than mine. All went well to make an agreeable *conversazione*.

It was while the tea was circulating that I noticed my wife handing a cup to the learned professor of psychology, as we styled him.

An abrupt pause by the pianist, made intentionally, had the effect of showing up the fashionable barbarism which contends with the artist in music for the monopoly of attention, and several loud talkers were hushed. One was emphasising his views of marriage, saying:

“In a case of elective affinity I should defy conventionalism, the church, and every law—save one.”

At this juncture poor Martha came in. Lucy took her by the hand and introduced her as Madame Otto Klek. This was the first time since our return

from the Continent that we had called her by her proper name. I observed the professor's face, that it quivered and twitched as he regarded her—extra attentively, I thought—and made a few commonplace remarks.

Madame Klek's name was repeated in several directions as many heads turned, and all eyes were attracted to her commanding yet gentle personality. A forced expression of cheerfulness sat uneasily on her pale countenance, which, however, flushed at the noise of some breakage happening just then to the china that was being removed down the kitchen stairs. Nova, who went out of the room to see, returned saying that the accident was caused by the new woman's clumsiness. I wondered whether she had been drinking.

It was a Social Science Congress in miniature. We had a little taste, if not a great choice, of all sorts of opinions and crochets, fads and theories. There was a Mrs. Limple, who recited an ode to Co-operation—one of her own composing—in order to demonstrate, as she said, "Science in Poetry." Her opening stanza was grandiloquent enough; the rest may be imagined:—

"Co-operation like a cord will bind
The many little into one great mind;
It seeks t'achieve the practical solution
Of problems in our social constitution.
It squares the circles where imprudence lurks,
Creates perpetual motion in good works,—
Centre of gravity, 'twill charm, entice,
Draw, fix and hold the truth as in a vice.
This is the lever that is long enough
To move the world. . . ."

At this point a slight movement—not to say disturbance—occurred. It was caused by the withdrawal of one of our guests, an editor of a morning

paper whose extra-matutinal office hours obliged him to retire early; and the short interval afforded our authoress an opportunity to take breath. Her critics likewise profiting, two of the younger ones sitting behind her exchanged notes that were overheard :

" She has a fine head. Do you see her points ? "

" Yes,—hair-pins ? "

" Good. But take care, I say; she is evidently an American, or has, perhaps, been reading Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*, and she may turn round upon you. Then it will be all up with the centre of gravity. As Oliver Wendell Holmes says : ' A little science is a dangerous thing, as well as a little learning; only it's dangerous most to the fellow you may try it on.' "

One of the first to take leave was the psychological professor. He did so almost unobserved. I saw him out; and upon our shaking hands he drew me close as he whispered :

" You are guardian to that tall young lady, Madame Klek, are you not ? "

" I was so," I replied; " but a few months ago my responsibility ceased with her coming of age. Still, we all take a deep interest in her."

" Just so," he rejoined, " and on that account you will note well what I say. Watch her closely." After retaining my hand a moment he added : " She is passing, or about to pass, a terrible crisis. I know the secret."

" Do you ? " I eagerly inquired.

" Yes, as well as you do," he quickly responded.

" But you may be mistaken; tell me what you know," I urged impressively.

" Well," he replied, " I have a friend in the

faculty who attended the duel which Madame Klek fought with a man at Marseilles. Now you can guess the rest. She has been resisting the reaction; but a collapse is almost inevitable."

"Doctor," I said, "I still think you are mistaken; but we will, I promise you, take every precaution."

"And watch her closely," he repeated, as he stepped on to the pavement.

"Latest News!"—"Awful Slaughter!"—"War in Egypt!"—"Yer yah, Sir,—Evening Paper!"

These were the cries I heard from the direction of the Euston Road as the door was being closed; or else my ears deceived me. For an instant I hesitated, then decided to ignore the painful news and wait until the morning before purchasing a paper.

CHAPTER XXV

INSCRUTABLE

THERE was a rift in the clouds that evening after our guests had all departed. Martha became more communicative. She seemed to be actuated by the notion that since her husband had ceased to correspond his silence was due to one of three causes: his tacit admission of a certain point she had been contending, or an interruption in the postal service, or death. Together we discussed the middle supposition, and came to the conclusion that it was untenable, because there had been no public notice given of any such interruption, while, in the city, communications, both telegraphic and postal, were regularly maintained with Alexandria up to that eventful date. Again and again our most persuasive efforts failed to dislodge or discover the nature of the secret which she cherished so tenaciously. With her hands clasped and resting on the table before her, she looked steadfastly into the mirror over the mantelpiece and solemnly, audibly, vowed once more, "Till death us do part." The next moment she seemed to relent, as if exhausted after the day's work. At any rate, Martha promised Lucy that, under certain unspecified conditions, she would open her mind to us on the morrow. They embraced each other; and Martha shook my hand with a pleasant "Good-night, Mr. Glenn," just as in former times. Then

she went to her room to rest, while we two, too tired to sleep, remained up to conjecture—and to hope.

Hours passed, until we saw the dawn shimmer across the chimney stacks opposite. Our *tête-à-tête* had continued, regardless of the shutting-up and cessation of all movements below-stairs, until our dozing finally resolved itself into sound sleep. But now we awoke shivering in our chairs—it was four o'clock! Noiselessly we proceeded to our own chamber. The spell lay heavy upon us for not more than a couple of hours. Then it was ruthlessly broken; and we were suddenly aroused from our beds to hasten to the side of one whereon lay, placid, the form (ever beautiful) of our brave governess and devoted friend, attired as she had left us overnight, but lifeless and with a small bottle in her open hand.

Our emotions were indescribable. I shall not attempt to withdraw the curtain or recount all the mournful details that can be more easily imagined. The awful sadness of death is more solemnly impressive when one is in the presence of a youthful corpse, extended rigid, silent, cold. Then, more than ever else, one is inclined to cry—though despairingly—to the Father of all life, and to beg with importunity for a premature answer to the eternal “Why?”

“Watch her very closely.” These parting words of the professor now recurred to my mind with peculiar force, and seemed to burn like the writing on the wall. I repeated them to Lucy as she leaned on the mantelshelf and groaned—having exhausted her tears. Turning towards me with an effort, she expressed an opinion in a whisper; while two doctors

who had been summoned from the immediate neighbourhood were heard coming up-stairs.

"Peter," she said, "I will watch her; you go at once and fetch your eminent friend."

Ignoring all else, I rushed as fast as the hansom horse was allowed to gallop; and, being fortunate, returned with the professor in less than an hour. My recollection of that early morning drive is so fresh that I now feel again the same clammy perspiration on my forehead and in the palms of my hands. Hopelessness was the word, the only word that would have sufficed to describe my hang-dog appearance that was reflected in the little glass inside the cab. My companion, an aged man of science, sat and looked as imperturbable as the vehicular motion allowed. His facial expression was graver than usual, implying "no hope." Had he been of the clergy who preach about "a sure and certain hope," perhaps I should have come in for a lecture. My teeth alone chattered. Cabby shared the mutual sympathy, and silently took his fare, which I fished from my pocket with difficulty owing to extreme nervousness.

The professor and the local medical men conferred together at the top of the stairs. Then they entered the death-chamber alone; while my wife stood and told me that during my absence they had done next to nothing but watch. As to the doctors' opinions, one seemed to think that the quantity of poison taken was insufficient to account for the fact—some of the contents of the bottle having escaped on to the bed—and that possibly it was a case of suspended animation. The rigidity of the limbs which we had noticed was unusual, yet life had been restored under similar conditions. The other doctor

dissented; and both of them were at a loss as to the best means to employ in the attempt to revive the body.

After a quarter of an hour's suspense, the pessimistic doctor retired quietly, convinced, he said, that there was not a shadow of hope. And he volunteered to communicate with the coroner.

The professor and his colleague insisted upon continuing their watch, nevertheless. Meantime, the day developed; and although every possible care was taken to prevent noise and procure silence, the daily duties of the household had to be done and the family's needs supplied. Nova ceased to be a child and became all at once a little woman, practically assisting her mother; which was the best sympathy she could have shown.

Martha's things had to be examined. But after diligent search had been made, there were no traces of premeditation or signs affording a clue to the reason for, or immediate cause of, her suicide. Her writing-desk was open, and appeared to have been used very recently; yet, although a packet of envelopes lay as if it had only just then lost one, while there was a fresh impression on the blotting-pad of Captain Klek's address, no letters of his, or hers to him, were discoverable. It was remarkably strange, and we were left to draw our own conclusions. One idea, which naturally occurred, was that she had received a shock through the latest news from Alexandria of the massacres in its streets on the previous Sunday. But how she could have got the evening papers did not transpire. And the fact that the Captain was disguised as an Arab, bearing the pseudonym of Ali Ben Zara, precluded the assumption that he must have been among those

Europeans who were slain by the followers of Arabi Pacha.

I had already written urgently to the firm of gun-makers in Paris for whom Captain Klek travelled on commission; but neither they nor my wife's relations in the same line of business were able to afford any later information than we possessed.

A belated letter from the Captain, addressed to his wife, was presented by the postman, who, hearing that she had died, endorsed it accordingly and refused to leave it at our house.

Mrs. Cawley called while I was gone to telegraph, and the housemaid—fool-like—let her go. It appeared that the woman asked to see Madame Klek, and, upon the girl saying that she was dead, Mrs. Cawley reeled with astonishment, repeating to herself, "Dead! Dead!" She clutched the area banister-rail and was going away, so the girl followed her up a few steps, adding :

"But, I say, you was the last person in the room with 'er. Did you notice anythink?"

Mrs. Cawley made no reply, but kept on repeating : "Dead! Dead! and I was the last to see her alive. Dead!" as she walked slowly away. As soon as I heard this matter I gave information to the police, and caused inquiries to be made in every direction. But Mrs. Cawley, for some reason known only to herself, had disappeared altogether, and could never be found again.

It transpired that the last sounds from Martha's room—not in the least unusual sounds—had been heard as late as midnight. Twelve hours later—at noon precisely—she returned to life!

So gently was the information of this astounding fact spread, in such a light whisper and with so

much trepidation lest the cup of our rapture should slip and be dashed from our lips, that we hardly dared to breathe. We looked at each other and said, as Emerson once said of the immortality of the soul, "It is too good to be believed."

"She is not dead now," said the professor, who, with his blanched face and sunken eyes, looked as if he had himself come straight from his coffin. "She was dead, to all appearances, and is alive again; but not for long, I am afraid. You may suspend your morning preparations, but do not altogether reverse them."

He had scarcely finished his extraordinary announcement, the effect of which was enough to turn our profound sorrow into overwhelming joy—notwithstanding the concluding caution against too much assurance—when the undertaker called! and I had the peculiar pleasure of countermanding the orders that had been given to him.

Our transports of delight, manifested as they were in different ways, produced a revulsive shock to our nerves. While Lucy wrung her hands, crying and laughing hysterically, I trembled violently, and my teeth began to rattle. The doctor enjoined us both to eat, for we had not broken our fasts that morning.

Martha's recovery was a slow, long affair. But her permanent restoration was started and accelerated by the relief which she gained through the act of voluntarily rendering to us a full and complete explanation of the circumstances and facts which had induced her secretiveness and brought about that feeling of mental isolation which jeopardised her life. Her constitutional fortitude returned, and the danger of a recurrence of such fits was

averted. Nevertheless, our professor, as well as other doctors who were consulted, advised a very careful avoidance of all kinds of excitement. More especially was she warned against the pursuit of inquiries into and about her own nativity and the conduct—past and present—of her relations, prompted though she might be by natural curiosity and filial and conjugal affection.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE QUEST

NEARLY ten years have elapsed since we, as a family, left Marseilles for London, carrying away with us fresh recollections, not only of an agreeable climate and a light-hearted yet deceitful and in many cases vindictive people, but the career of a young English governess which had culminated in a duel with a Frenchman.

We are now standing on the upper deck of a Messageries Maritimes steamer actually weighing anchor in the dock of *La Joliette*. Our destination is Egypt. Lucy leans on my arm. Nova, who has grown to be a little taller than her mother, rests her hand upon my other shoulder, while we watch the setting sun, glorious still in November. Martha, too, is with us. She now sits supporting her chin with her hand and gazing intently at a well-remembered spot. As beautiful and noble a woman as ever she was; in tender love to the friends who stood her in the stead of relations, in charity towards the poor—including the ungrateful—wherever she can find them, in amiable and even temper, in the modesty with which she displays her talents as well as in her unaffected yet elegant comportment. Her presence is not only remarkable, but it invariably attracts. Among her admirers are many who hope to obtain her hand in marriage,

and some who have dared to ask it. To these alike she shows no indifference or coldness, but adroitly contrives to retain their friendship while firmly repelling their advances. Her whole stock of love—of the kind suitable for match-making as it ought to be made—has been consigned to one party, and conveyed in letters that have never been recovered. Of this she may now be thinking.

A lithesome young man, who has just left the vessel after having carried a few of our *impedimenta* on board and received a substantial *douceur*, stands bare-headed on the edge of the quay. To him we wave our hands and say—"Adieu, Garot !"

Ten years ! We have actually passed that portion of time. It has not "rolled by" us, as we say with as much incorrectness as when we speak of a "rising" and a "setting" sun. Time, absolute, is a part of eternity which is impossible of conception as "passing." No, if time is to be described or compared by figure of speech, it would seem more suitable to mark our expenditure of it by posts and milestones, which we may arrive at if we live long enough. For while man is active, time is passive.

Thus reflecting, I stood on the freshly-swabbed deck as we entered the Straits of Messina at eight o'clock on a fine morning. The sunlight caught the crest of millions of wavelets that rippled under a deliciously fresh breeze; and the apparently limitless expanse of dazzling blue and gold dazzled one's eyes, so that they turned for relief to the massive dark grey clouds that hung over the Italian coast. Angels must be differently formed to bear the light of heaven's perpetual day (for St. John says "There is no night there"); but human

optics need the reposeful shade, particularly when the mind is contemplating. A brief exposure suffices to convey an impression, but it is the dark chamber which develops.

My cogitations drifted back to the cause which had operated to bring us away from London again. It was threefold. Firstly, our dear old friend, Nelson, had recently succumbed to an inflammation resulting from exposure to the mistral; and he having appointed me his sole legatee, I had come over to execute the legal formalities, and to perform the last sad duty of affection by causing a stone to be erected on his grave in the *cimetière* at St. Pierre. Secondly, my wife's ill-health demanded that she should winter in a climate like that of the Delta. Thirdly, we were impelled by a desire, which had remained keen with us all from the day of Martha's collapse until now, to make a final effort to find out what had really become of Captain Klek.

I was retired from business; otherwise we could not have accomplished the latter object. Our boy March could very well remain over Christmastide at Winchester, where he was completing his scholastic training to our complete satisfaction. Martha and Nova, who were closer companions than ever, shared our plans, to which was to be added the natural wish to see Egypt for its own sake.

Arriving off Alexandria at midnight, we were unable to cross the bar until daybreak. The voyage had been a fair one, occupying, as usual, a little over five days. The full complement of passengers comprised, besides an English Colonial bishop, few of our own nationality. Nevertheless, the effect of British enterprise was manifest in the

presence of several Cook's tourists, and an English doctor who was going to assume the functions of resident physician at Mena House, that palatial modern hotel close by the Pyramids.

It was eight o'clock before the vessel got alongside and was ready to disembark its passengers. Some of them, who were in the habit of taking their coffee early, were greatly annoyed to find that the steward, *chef*, or *traiteur* had shut up shop, and that no kind of refreshment had been procurable on board since the previous night. We felt famished before we had got through the customs-house and into an hotel.

Such a jabbering, quarrelsome crowd of Arabs, native touts, porters, etc., trying to snatch one's bags and small luggage pressed around. We were glad to get clear out of their way and that of the donkeys who seemed to claim and possess equal rights to the passages. There did not appear to be a respectable person among the lot of them. A strong effort of the imagination was requisite to picture Captain Klek as an Arab. How much superior in physique he must have looked, and what a type for a commercial traveller! In the bazaar and at the cafés we encountered many well-to-do natives; but their general appearance was uninspiring. Yet the Eastern dress properly worn imparts dignity; while the tight-fitting clothes of Western civilisation betray the ungainly framework of the poor fork-shaped being that man is.

My initial inquiries were made at the address to which Captain Klek's stock of fire-arms had been consigned in the first instance. The firm had ceased to exist. Nothing but faint recollections of their transactions remained in the locality.

Disappointment was out of the question—we had expected no more. But our hopes, resting on broad collateral researches that we intended to make, grew and spread tendril-like as we beheld the strange city, forgetting the long interval, and oblivious of the changes it had undergone during those past ten years.

Instead of proceeding at once to Cairo, the metropolis and seat of officialdom, we adopted the advice of several friends and waited a while on the coast in order to get acclimatised. There was plenty to interest in the neighbourhood and in the eastern suburbs, through which there is a direct line of railway, well appointed and punctually served as a British undertaking should be.

At Ramleh we found apartments and rested, making frequent little excursions on foot (and on feet) into adjacent hamlets and down by the khedival Winter Palace to the sea-shore. The latter was uninteresting and ankle deep in sand. At the outer gates of the palace stood a couple of eunuchs, one of whom had a long stick, which he used more or less cruelly on the heads of a string of labourers who were engaged carrying in baskets of sand for some repairs that were going on. Their larger beast of burden is better treated. But, unlike his biped competitor, he is spiteful and difficult to control. When in a bad temper he is dangerous to approach. Notwithstanding this fact, I once saw a camel of unusual size rush, with a noise like that of a vicious horse kicking, out of a Bedouin enclosure followed by a very small child stark naked. He shouted to the monster, and, picking up a stick, a mere twig, ran after him for some hundred yards, until suddenly the animal changed his mind,

stopped short, and allowed the little chap to lead him back by his halter cord. Camels appear to regard with contempt the humble, but more useful, ass, which may be seen threading its way carefully among the crowds in the unpaved narrow streets. Anon he carries a bag of rice, or two huge drooping bundles of sugar-cane; and he bears his master to and fro the markets. A good white-coated Egyptian donkey is worth thirty pounds or so. He is curbed with a bearing-rein and taught to glide along at a respectable rate without lifting his heels too high, thus obviating the necessity for his rider to bump the saddle. We all took to donkey-riding and learnt to say "Ziz!" when we wanted to stop. The need for this little bit of knowledge was proved whenever we got out of the drivers' reach.

CHAPTER XXVII

HYGIENE

My sympathising interest was aroused on behalf of the poor donkey boys, whose culture and protection—more than that of their steeds—might repay the benevolence of a Lord Shaftesbury. They (the boys) often appealed—unconsciously, perhaps—to our compassion, making for themselves beds in the sand side by side with their animals, to whom Nature seemed to have been partial, in covering their bodies with a lifelong, well-fitting skin, impervious to climatic changes; while their servants (the boys) inherited hides so tender that their life depended upon the acquisition of, at least, a pair of *caleçons* and a calico shirt. To be able to converse with them, one was obliged to learn a little more Arabic; and signs with patience and backsheesh facilitated wonderfully.

At the Ramleh terminus station half-a-dozen of these boys attended to meet the trains. One particularly took my fancy. He perceived it and followed up his chance. Despite the treacherous colour of his skin, I remarked his flesh was really dirty; and I gave him to understand that my favour was affected by the fact. The next day, upon observing me approach, and while yet a great way off, he went to the large water-butt which stood on the platform for drinking purposes (the natives

using their hands as cups), and, plunging his head completely under the water, after much sputtering and snorting, and rubbing it all over with his hands—thoroughly washing out all “the little nooks and crannies”—he brought his shiny nob out dripping, and smilingly invited me to behold how clean he was.

“Yes,” I said, with a facial expression of disgust; “but you have spoilt the tub of water for drinking.”

“No, no, no!” he replied, wagging his forefinger. “The dirt has all sunk down—look!”

I reluctantly obeyed, and was bound to admit that there was a quantity of extra dirt at the bottom, while the water, as it became less troubled, gradually regained its clearness.

“It shows,” said I (and the stationmaster came to my assistance to interpret), “how very dirty you must have been for it to sink down like that.”

The artful beggar gave an incredulous grin, but at the sight of piastres he at once acknowledged that I was right. To the stationmaster, however, he made a pertinent remark to the effect that the gift was one of the advantages of not washing himself too often.

The official, an elderly and well-educated Greek, took exception to my strictness anent personal cleanliness, saying:

“I cannot help finding fault with the English people for their unfairness in this matter. Not only do they frequently mistake the natural colour of an African’s skin for dirt, but they complain of its smelling unwholesome; when the odour arises from the perfectly healthy epidermic exudations, without which we should all soon die. You will find, after a short residence here, that the climate does not compel one to suppress this necessary

perspiration by covering a large portion of the body's surface, as it does in London. Our air is not so impure as to serve the purpose of plaisters, by stopping the pores of the skin. Moreover, your white linen collar will not show a black lining, even after several days' wear. This proves that we are not subject to the same atmosphere as you are when at home.

"I have lived in London," he continued, "and remarked the coating of fine smuts that covers one's face after a long walk in a fog, as if it was slightly, but regularly, smeared with a dark greasy powder like you use in polishing brass. It is nothing but smoke dirt mingled with one's perspiration. But after a good wash and friction the flesh becomes—like the brass plates—radiant and beautiful, I must admit. That is sufficient, however, to account for your fair complexions and colours that are generally taken to indicate health; they are the consequence of the necessity for your frequent ablutions."

The equable temperature and soft air of Ramleh suited Lucy; and we all enjoyed seeing her free from cough and able to breathe freely and deeply. While here we made the acquaintance of two families, both Greek. One of the ladies spoke French and interpreted our conversations. We visited their local national church, but failed to appreciate its liturgy or to relish the privilege of holding lighted tapers in broad daylight.

There was a famous Italian riding-master in Alexandria. Nova took lessons from him, and once or twice we all drove, or rode, along the canal side, or out to Sidi-Gabr.

The British church of Ramleh, set picturesquely

on the hill overlooking the sea, was our objective on two Sunday mornings.

But, notwithstanding frequent trips to Alexandria, we could not endure the dullness of our environment ; neither did we fancy a residence in the city itself. So we booked for Cairo, where we spent the Christmas. It was there, I was told, I should be most likely to obtain information relating to Ali Ben-Zara, all my attempts in that respect having hitherto proved abortive. To relate fully my researches in that direction would involve taking the reader into every hotel, restaurant, and café, among all the dealers in fire-arms and bric-a-brac, in shops and at the native bazaars. The result being *nil*, the process would become tedious, and only end in dissatisfaction with nearly everything else, excepting the beverage served outside the Grand Café, whereat we sit and sip while others—to the habit born—imbibe tobacco-smoke cooled by being drawn through the *narghile*, with its long snake-like tube and thick amber mouthpiece.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ANTIQUITIES

FROM the citadel of Cairo to the Kasr-el-Nil, where lovely, lazy dahabeahs lie, with Cook & Son's spick-and-span steamboats alongside, near the gigantic iron drawbridge, the population, variously estimated—but numbering, probably, four hundred thousands—is composed for the most part of foreigners; that is to say, other than natives of Cairo. To be able to talk with the majority of the people one must speak at least seven languages, as they do at the post-office and the principal chemists' shops, where, by the way, I was happy to find a clue to the object of my incessant search, and I was invited to call again in a few days.

From our hotel window we looked down into the Esbekieh Public Gardens, which were once planted with a specimen of every known tree in the world. It is still a beautiful place, although it contains, besides its horticultural wonders, a theatre and a café-restaurant. The gardens form a line of demarcation between the native and the foreign, or European, quarters. At Shepheard's and the "New" Hotels the entrances were thronged with visitors. On the pavement in front, famous dragomans await engagements. One remarkable figure, standing over six feet six and robed in a stiff white-and-gold livery that would have suited Babylon redivivus, was the hall-porter from Mena House.

As I stood looking about me that first morning after our arrival, there was a brisk movement among the people in the road to clear the way for a smart-looking brougham drawn by a pair of lithe, long-tailed horses, and preceded by a couple of runners called *sais*. These naked-shinned Soudanese are picturesque enough, with their short white tunics, gold embroidered red vests, full white linen sleeves, tarboosh, and a long blue-black silk tassel which hangs behind streaming like a pigtail as they run. Each *sais* carries a long cane to show his authority and drive away tag-rag and bobtail. Beside the driver on the box sat a sleek black eunuch, while inside the carriage, with blinds drawn closely, were ladies of the harem of Prince Hassan. At least so we were told; one could see nothing of them.

In the course of my peregrinations, which generally took place in the early part of the day, I came across a little workshop wherein a dozen men and boys were seated on the ground—bare earth—turning, by means of the lathe in its primitive shape (the resting tool being held by the toes), the delicate wooden rails that are used in making those pretty lattice screens, frames, etc., that adorn the interiors of some of the best houses, both in Egypt and in England. This kind of work is known as *moosh-arabia*, and figures largely among the stock of dealers in Oriental bric-a-brac, which fashionable people come out here to buy, while they leave their servants in London on board wages with nothing to do but go and look at the shops in Regent Street, where similar goods are offered at lower prices than those paid for them at Cairo itself!

Near to the European provision market I saw

a dozen boys and girls surrounding an old man, who received from them the handful of cigarettes and cigar remnants they had picked off the streets during the previous night. I noted the quantity which represented their gross takings, about three pounds in weight, and I learnt that it would all be rubbed together and worked up into cigarettes again—by hand!

Americans make cigarettes by machinery, and so do the Russians. The French government cigarette factory I have visited at Marseilles was clean, and the *ouvrières* were very tidy. Upon a glass rod they hold the tube of paper and tuck the weed in deftly. One accepts a specimen and lights it with a relish as soon as he gets outside. But Egyptian hand-made cigarettes are all rolled between the dusky fingers of Levantine youths, who, somehow, always look unwholesome and unclean. How is it that Egyptian cigarettes are much preferred by English smokers? The tobacco itself does not grow in that country, but is imported.

We visited at leisure all the most notable mosques, some of which were carpeted richly; but most of the buildings were in a terribly dilapidated state. The late viceroy's palace at Ghizeh we inspected, with its unrivalled museum of mummies and its curious mirrored saloon, which, however, has been surpassed by the *Optique* example at the recent Paris Exhibition.

Nova and I commenced the ascent of the great Cheops one day with the aid of a couple of guides to each of us; but, finding it difficult and fatiguing for a short-legged person like myself, we agreed to "do" the interior instead, for which purpose we had to climb down backwards upon all-fours, as

apes might have done to illustrate the Descent of Man. Meantime Lucy stayed with Martha at Mena House, where we all took lunch together.

Owing to its distance from the sea, the climate of Cairo was far preferable to that of Alexandria. We patronised the popular mode of conveyance, so that four special donkeys waited for us outside our hotel every afternoon. We were not in the habit of flying, scurrying over the ground, and perchance over the children and dogs that came in our way; but we took our promenades gently rather than genteelly, getting down frequently to make purchases or to ask prices of antiquities that we knew beforehand were beyond our means. A piece of a mummy, however, cost less than a whole one or a sarcophagus. We actually bought, for five shillings, the hand, in a beautiful state of preservation, of one of Pharaoh's wives. Which Pharaoh or which wife it was impossible to ascertain; whether the first love or the last, the thick-lipped wayward sulky lump or the *spirituelle* counsellor; the hysterical uneven-tempered charmer or the princess from whom her lord would take a nagging without resenting it. But, the bandage having been removed from three of the fingers, the nails of the lady are seen to be quite perfect and elegantly trimmed to spatule shape; the idea of that hand representing the claws of a jealous termagant is therefore precluded.

To the majority of tourists here, pleasure-seeking seems to consist in making the round of the shops where these lugubrious curios or antiquities are sold, or rambling among the ruins of Old Cairo with its unaccountably huge dust-heap day by day, and its ancient ghoulish-ghostly cemetery by night—when

there is a moon. Pleasure, like alcohol, can be extracted from almost anything. Those who have assisted at a bull-fight can testify to the thrilling enjoyment it affords to thousands of spectators on a Sunday afternoon, as well in Bordeaux as in Barcelona. Look closely at that young amateur of pleasure—right into his face—you will perceive “A kin’ o’ smily round the lips, an’ teary round the lashes,” and no mistake. The same signs, denoting equal emotion, you may meet with by observing the philatelist as he lights unexpectedly upon a rare old postage stamp.

As a confirmed peregrinator I confess to a weakness for sightseeing. Let it be a conflict between the police and national reformers in Trafalgar Square, or a riot among “*les Rats de Marseille*”; the great fire in Tooley Street, or the destruction of the monument in the Place Vendôme—I must be there to see, and if possible, to enjoy it. Most other people may be differently constituted, as was the proprietress of a country dame’s school, who not only kept her scholars indoors during a punch-and-judy show, but had all the shutters closed while she sat rigid with cane in hand until the last hoity-toity had died away. Some few other people are not quite so consistent.

I once met a friend at night in a dense crowd opposite a floor-cloth factory in a state of conflagration. He was a pious objector to sights, and deprecated spectacular drama, fairs, and all that sort of thing. Said I, suddenly putting my hand on his shoulder :

“Hullo ! What, you here ? ”

“Yes,” he replied confusedly. “Have you seen my boy Jim ? I—I came here to fetch him home.”

At that instant, with an awful crash, the stupendous timber carcase of the building toppled and fell into the blazing abyss. By an optical illusion, the ground we stood on seemed to be lifted as in an earthquake. Such a sensation was worth any amount. My friend must have enjoyed it. Ungratefully, however, for a minute after—the crowd having been dislocated through the event—he was missing. But, strange to say, his son Jim was standing there in his father's place !

"Hullo, Jim ! you here ?" I exclaimed with surprise and amusement.

"Yes," he replied. "Have you seen my father ? I came to fetch him home."

How often appearances are saved by a good excuse.

On January 7, 1892, we had collected all the needful information at Gaze's office and counted the cost of a trip we contemplated taking some hundred miles farther up the Nile. But this project was ruthlessly thwarted by a sinister piece of news that was brought to us by the head assistant at the pharmacy where I had inquired urgently for intelligence respecting Ali Ben Zara. The pharmacist had promised to communicate with one of their customers—a certain rich fellah who had been heard to speak of dealings with Ben Zara in the earlier days of Arabi's insurgence. The courteous apothecary was a man whose attainments (not only as a linguist, but as a botanist to whom the scientific world owed the discovery of several new seaweeds) merited a doctor's degree. By his present manner I guessed "no thoroughfare" for our hopes. It was not really so, but on the contrary, for he had

arranged for me to call on the fellah in question in the course of our journey back to Alexandria.

My learned acquaintance was pressed to stay and dine with us, we being then at table. As he took his seat he accounted for his sadness, which was strikingly manifest, by stating that the Khedive had died suddenly that very evening ! While we were, of course, very much shocked, I thought here was a chance for us to witness the pomp of an Eastern funeral ; likewise a possibility of recognising among the thousands who would assemble at Cairo, a well-remembered face and form. The idea seemed almost unnatural, like seeking for the living among the dead.

CHAPTER XXIX

POMP

TEWFIK PACHA was a refined man notwithstanding his early education, which was achieved without going to Europe. The British chaplains both at Cairo and Alexandria concurred in eulogy of his integrity and amiability, even to upholding him as a pattern to Christians. He was a Mahommedan, of course, and belonged to the strict sect of Howling Dervishes. Yet he respected other religions. Frequently he visited the British church at Ramleh during its construction, and conversed with the chaplain as with an equal. To our Soldiers' Institute he contributed fifty pounds. Besides being a vegetarian and a non-smoker, he possessed a virtue that raised him much above the level of those who only do what is right through lack of opportunity to do wrong—unobserved. Tewfik restricted himself to one wife, although the laws of his country and his faith permit an unlimited number to a man in his exalted station. However, this good man died and was buried; and it is just between these two acts—the first, which he performed for himself, and the last, that was performed for him—that my sketch comes in.

The hall-porter is sitting in the doorway of our hotel hearing his little son repeat a passage from the Koran as we pass out. Nearly all the shops are

closed, and a cloud hangs over the Mousky, or High Street. The bazaar of stalls that nestle in the labyrinth of filthy alleys is deserted. Excepting a few perishable articles, nothing is being offered for sale in this marketing thoroughfare, but everybody looks excited in anticipation of the extraordinary funeral procession which is expected at noon. The Abdeen Palace, to which the vice-regal corpse was brought from Helouan overnight, is a spacious building, in its plainness and size resembling our Buckingham Palace. A constant stream of loyal subjects and polite foreigners arrive to inscribe their names in a book placed near the entrance, as is customary in Catholic countries. On the opposite side of the way a stupendous awning has been erected, under which the prayers of the faithful are being offered. Away on the other side of the city a whole regiment of native infantry in khaki is being paraded in front of Shephard's Hotel. The young officers, being British, do not forget to glance now and again at the string of fair faces regarding them from the balconies of the grand building. From various other directions military guards are proceeding in squads to their respective allotted posts between the palace and the tomb. It is emphatically a busy day, although all business is suspended.

As early as ten o'clock the bright scarlet uniform of British troops lines both sides of the Mousky, their tunics almost touching, so close is their formation. It looks as if a revolt were expected to break out in this densely inhabited thoroughfare, which is more than a mile long, very narrow, undrained, and contributes a normal annual death-rate of forty-six to the thousand. Besides the Mousky, three

boulevards and other streets radiate from the central square, wherein one finds the General Post Office and the Courts of Justice; the European market and the bureau of the salt tax (since abolished). This great central "Place" is being guarded by infantry mounted on camels. Their aspect is rather imposing, yet it seems to lack in compactness. With plenty of field they could no doubt cover ground swiftly, but their proportions would render them too easy targets for the enemy.

Many thousands of people are gathered around here; every now and then they assume the features of an angry crowd or mob by their loud wranglings and gesticulations. There is a momentary stir; the mounted police under Kitchener Pacha are urging everyone to move on. Much gossip prevails, and rumour conveys the impression of a seditious outbreak. It has got about that the Khedive did not die a natural death, but was killed by foreign doctors. But the truth, when it transpired, proved that only native doctors were employed until after the crisis. The story is circulated that when the Khediva was told the worst news she sent for Salem Pacha, the chief doctor, and struck him, or boxed his ears!

It is indeed a motley crowd of Turk, Persian, Abyssinian, Egyptian, European, and Soudanese. In order to properly distinguish between them one has to take into account dress, colour of skin, hair, and features. We take our stand (or seat) on a first floor in the Sharia Abdul Aziz, where it is most thronged with people. The side streets also are choked with vehicles full of eager spectators. Along the kerb native policemen are stationed six feet apart. The roadway is bordered likewise with

artillerymen dismounted by the side of their gun-carriages and horses. As we range ourselves along the overhanging balcony we become purposely conspicuous. Martha, dressed with that intent, and being recommended by us to do nothing to detract from her importance, is prominently distinguishable by some thousands of people. Boldly she defies criticism in the forlorn hope of encountering her Captain once more.

Memory, which had already carried me back to my first sight of a grand funeral—the Duke of Wellington's—revives the recollection of yet another scene wherein my own aunt, a remarkably handsome woman of Spanish extraction, had taken me with her to witness the royal laying of a foundation stone at the Licensed Victuallers' Asylum in South London. She was requested by the authorities to resign her Charles I spaniel to my charge and step forward very near to the Prince Consort, so as to complete a group which the artist of an illustrated paper was about to sketch. Martha now reminded me of my beautiful aunt, but the noble Consort was lacking, alas !

At two o'clock the hot sun glares in our faces. There is considerable buzzing and shuffling among the people below as the signal is given for the artillerymen to mount and move slowly forward: this to make way for a large, loose crowd coming surging and shouting around ten buffalo oxen which are being driven to the shambles, there to be slaughtered and divided among the poor. Following closely after twelve camels labourly swing past, each one bearing two big boxes of bread and dates, which the drivers sitting between keep on throwing out, two and three cakes at a time, to the scrambling

mob of both sexes and all ages who rush at each shower pell-mell, and tumbling often under the moving animals. A great wave of laughter greets this display of scramble and scrimmage, at which nobody is shocked or scandalised. And why should we be? Every picture has a background. Tragedy is relieved by bits of humour. The ancient Greeks had a skull or a skeleton at their feasts; but they were none the less jovial for it. Irish wakes end in mirthful bouts, and our friends across the Channel aver that we take our pleasures sadly. Is it not a fact that our newspaper reports of famous trials, and solemn ones too, that often terminate in the death sentence, teem with "Laughter" in parenthesis? While this is so, we dare not find fault with these hilarious intercalations of the heathen on their most solemn occasions.

Now four water-carts, or big barrels on wheels, drawn by mules, pass towards the Mousky quarter, whither the procession all tends, and where the mounted infantry all "fall in." The cavalcade gives place to mourners, nearly all of whom are on foot. First officers of the Egyptian army, then British officers with General Walker in a uniform studded with decorations. He is mounted on a charger. General Sir Francis Grenfell walks with his numerous staff. A fair young officer is pointed out to us as the nephew of the late General Gordon, of Khartoum fame.

Flags of all colours and sizes vary the order of things from military to civil. Eighteen priests, chanting monotonously from open Korans, introduce a large body of the Dancing Dervishes with their tall busbies of camel hair, and also the Howling

Dervishes, whose strange devotional performance we had witnessed in their mosque only the previous week. The frequent boom of the fortress gun as it now strikes the ear reminds us of the awful grunt in unison that proceeded from the lungs of those same Dervishes, while they stood in a semi-circle with their eyes closed and their bodies agitated, working up a high pitch of fervour, until presently, perspiring and exhausted, they rather abruptly retire from the assembly room.

Pending our reflections, the grand stream continues to flow. A bevy of slim youthful students in uniform represent the government *lycée*. The Italian colony, or a good few of them at least, march past beneath green and white banners of silk.

The Pharmaceutical Society, and students from the military schools, compose a large body, and are accompanied by a band of choristers.

Thomas Cook & Son send a dozen stalwart boatmen wearing new blue guernseys, with the name of the firm worked in red on their breasts *à la* Salvation Army. They carry a magnificent wreath of violets, and altogether, for the nonce, would seem to worthily represent that ever-increasing stream of globe-trôtters which will some day find, or make, open way between Cairo and the Cape.

Notable merchants in both European and Eastern costume, employees of the State, all wearing the indispensable red fez, pass sadly.

Magistrates, barristers in robes and headgear (no wigs), bankers and their clerks, more high State functionaries, railway directors, pachas wearing medals and orders, the Coptic clergy, the Orthodox Greek and Christian clergies and

Jewish rabbis, follow in the rear ; and after a space come the diplomatic and consular personages—Sir E. Baring (now Lord Cromer), who is said to possess a more complete knowledge of Egypt than any other living British official. One fine tall man (a Russian ?) comes dressed in furs from head to feet.

A dense crowd of about two thousand men, all attired in sombre black and tarbooshed, precede a host of pachas, princes, and the Grand Kadi, together with Ulemas and more chanting boys.

A few mounted soldiers complete the formal pageant.

Some forty attendants, dressed as civilians in black and holding trays containing vases of perfumes, are probably the undertakers of embalming.

A perceptible feeling of awe creeps over us as we behold the bier borne on the shoulders of six tall men. It resembles a large door, or shutter, upon which improvised stretcher some unfortunate workman who has met with an accident might be taken by his mates to the hospital.

The recumbent body is covered lightly with a cachmere, simple, without effectually masking its form. At the head is sticking up a post about eighteen inches high, upon which is placed the khedival tarboosh ; while upon the corpse itself are displayed the sword and the habitual garments, with the decorations as recently worn by this Friend of Peace, His Highness Mohammed Tewfik the First, Second Khedive of Egypt, Sixth Viceroy of the dynasty of Mehemet Ali. Tewfik's greatest fault was the excusable weakness of dallying with the pretender Arabi Pacha ; but his prescience ultimately constrained him to put his trust

in the British occupation of his country, and he lived to prove its salutary effects.

After the bier, women appear for the first time upon the scene; and what a scene! An almost solid mass of African humanity—some two or three hundred black and bronzed female slaves, squeezing, crushing together.

Unlike the mercenaries of an ordinary funeral, who sham weeping and are careful to keep whole the clothes they pretend to tear, the lamentations of these poor creatures appear to be anything but hypocritical as they wave and stretch their bare arms overhead, like tottering branches on blasted trees.

Add to this exhibition of weird and harrowing turbulence their piercing shrieks and howling cries, and then contrast their loud wailings and boiling anguish with the quiet solemnity of the preceding portion of the procession.

“Yes, that’s it,” exclaims a bystander, about whose nationality there could be no doubt, “women can’t control their feelings. Ruskin is right to call those who take to public speaking ‘the shrieking sisterhood!’”

Before the whole procession (which has taken two hours to pass us) closes with two battalions of Egyptian infantry, some private carriages unostentatiously appear. One is conspicuous—a brougham—attracting every eye in sympathetic glances; for, just beneath the fringe of the drawn down blind, clutching the door is a lady’s hand belonging to the chief mourner, the Khediva herself!

Two days later I visited the tomb of Imam Chaffey, where Tewfik’s body lay, still unburied, by

the side of his late mother's remains. It was in an unfinished stone building about thirty feet square, with no roof, but a sail-cloth spread across the open top. At the entrance were several carriages waiting for visitors, mostly English. One was a lady; and there was some difficulty on account of her sex, but backsheesh put it right.

The surroundings were by no means sacred or quiet even within a few feet of the vice-regal remains, which lay upon the floor beneath a heap of shawls and trappings. Coffee was being served *ad lib.* in very pretty little cups; while close outside cigarette-smoking was going on. No ceremony was observed, but two or three kneeling and prostrate priests were engaged praying in turn night and day.

Freed from the stuffy chamber and the mixed odour of incense, tobacco, and superheated Arabs, I ascended the slopes leading to the Mokatam, that wonderful mountain on the sides of which is situated the citadel, a fortress of the utmost strategical importance. From the Mokatam are seen—across the city of Cairo and a dozen miles beyond—the Pyramids. As I beheld them for the last time, the sun—looking twenty times bigger than he ever appears to us in England—sought to hide himself behind their massive bases. This he accomplished by jerks, dropping out of sight like the nodding head of a weary watcher. To me it was sadly symbolic of Captain Klek's disappearance from this world; and I despaired of ever tracing even his last footsteps.

CHAPTER XXX

VESTIGES

ABOUT midway between Cairo and Alexandria lies the important town of Damanhour, to which I was advised to go in my quest after latent tidings of Ali Ben Zara. As I stepped off the train and ascended from the station to the road it was raining hard, and I felt very thankful to think that Lucy with Martha and Nova had gone on by themselves to Alexandria direct. The filthy mud under foot and the similar coloured faces of the native blackguards hanging around this, the most important entrance to Damanhour, prompted me to run away from it as fast as my legs would carry, before venturing to inquire for the cotton factory whose manager was to become my informant and interpreter. At the French vice-consulate I got the proper direction, and soon found myself sipping coffee in company with an intelligent Levantine or Syrian, a man of some thirty years, though looking much older, as is their wont in the East.

The small, neat European-style house adjoined the factory; and the room we were in was tolerably well furnished. Many things—pictures, wall decorations, etc.—indicated a superior, imported culture.

Getting at once to the point and object of my calling, I was scanning the numerous photos suspended and lying about to see if any of them bore

the least resemblance to the Captain, when my new acquaintance perceived my bent, and, smiling, shook his head, saying : " No, they will not assist you. But here," he cried, as he reached up over the doorway and lifted down a rifle which he placed in my hands, " is a souvenir. I bought it of Ali Ben Zara just previous to the battle of Tell-el-Kebir."

" Really ! " I exclaimed, and somewhat reverently began to examine the gun—lock, stock, and barrel—which bore, sure enough, the British trade mark and the initials of my wife's relatives. The few stamped characters produced a magical effect, like the sign of a brotherhood upon its members. The man in my presence became a kinsman or link between two beings, one of whom was, for the nonce, out of sight. Had this dusky overseer claimed the faculty of a clairvoyant, I could have believed in his mediumship. But I was doomed to make no further progress in my mission. Moreover, my offer of five pounds for the gun was declined. The factory, which was owned by an English Company, although substantially built and well conducted, required no small amount of care to keep it intact. The gun in question might be thought to silently operate as a deterrent to would-be robbers and sundry others of the lawless class. Such a weapon could be displayed in one's bureau ; but to have removed it and carried it away with me to Alexandria might have involved trouble when encountering Kitchener Pacha's constabulary. There remained only for me to accept the courteous invitation to inspect the premises wherein the cotton was being roughly treated by the gin and carding machines previous to its being packed in bales by hydraulic presses and shipped to Europe.

The workers, or hands, were all young people, mostly girls of from ten to fifteen years, and an under-overseer or foreman of, perhaps, twenty. He kept them to their tasks by means as drastic and ancient as the stick which was much in evidence.

Neither of these task-masters was married—in the generally accepted meaning of the term. Slavery of a certain kind was not uncommon, I was told, though the traffic was transacted *sub rosa*. When at Cairo, I was positively assured by one of the most trustworthy persons whom I met—a Swiss of many years' residence in Egypt—that some of Ibrahim Pacha's superfluous wives were disposed of at the rate of eighty pounds a head! To a superficial observer like myself it would appear quite true; as also the statement which I heard from several quarters, that native women's functions never—or scarcely ever—included the higher rôle of man's companion. They always were inferior physically and mentally, as a rule proved by the few exceptions, fewer in Egypt, perhaps, than elsewhere.

Retracing my steps in the direction of the railway-station, the Syrian accompanied me. We passed near to the market-place (not the bazaar) of Daman-hour, and there by accident, it seemed, a fellah was found who had been on somewhat intimate terms with the object of my unflagging search. From this individual I received a circumstantial account of Ben Zara's absorption into the ranks of the native army which opposed General Wolseley. What eventually became of his whilom comrade-in-arms this fellah utterly ignored. To the question, Did he know or recollect any other living being who might be able to give us more information? he replied "No," with a shake of the forefinger.

The two men kindly came and saw me off by the train; one of them accepted a cigar; both, my grateful thanks for their disinterested services.

The start was slow; and, notwithstanding the fact that the weather had improved, a heavy dullness pervaded the air.

The doleful, miserable appearance of the bog-like country through which I was being dragged away depressed my spirits, enough to make one perpetrate a very vulgar *jeu de mots* on the very name of the place.

Three natives—fellow-travellers from Damanhour—who sat facing me looked particularly solemn, as if they had caught my affection. They ceased talking and cast their eyes upward. I wondered what it meant, until the train drew up at a small station where they got out; and, throwing themselves each on to a small carpet, they all knelt and prayed with their faces turned towards the setting sun. It formed, for me, one of the most impressive sights. Our train actually waited for the devotees nearly a quarter of an hour.

Every day the chances of lighting upon certain testimony concerning Captain Klek's fate seemed to grow fewer and poorer. The military authorities at both Cairo and Alexandria were troubled by me in vain, and so were the respective post-offices of the French, British, and Egyptian Governments. I did not like the idea of returning empty from the country wherein so noticeable a man had undoubtedly lived and traded less than ten years since. It was believed to be almost impossible to trace a unit among an irregular army of some ninety thousand men. Had he occupied a very prominent post, or distinguished himself for inhumanity or crime

and been caught, the records of courts-martials or criminal trials might have served my purpose. I was loth to investigate in the latter direction, and drew the line there lest I should have to blush for the memory of a man for whom I had all along too much admiration and respect to believe him capable of wounding the feelings of an insect unnecessarily. I would have been contented to learn that he had died facing the enemy, though the cause he had espoused was wrong in itself.

At length we began to reconcile ourselves to disappointment, and to make up our minds to quit the land of mystery unsolved. All its other charms fell flat since we were beaten in our quest. The next P. & O. steamer to re-cross the Mediterranean was advertised to leave in less than a week from that date. We resolved to go by her.

CHAPTER XXXI

PRECINCTS OF DISCOVERY

It was a cheerful task rather, to pack up and see to the proper dispatch to London of a few bargains in carpets, a narghile, a tavola, etc., that we had accumulated in our bazaar ramblings. In this operation I was assisted by a young German merchant whose acquaintance we had made at the Hôtel de l'Europe. He was on a prospective visit, with a view to create a business in Alexandria. It was proposed that he should join us in an excursion to Rosetta, a place I had often wished to see, for no particular reason that I can now remember, excepting that the name " Rosetta " sounded sweet.

To this end we all went first to Ramleh, where we bade adieu to our former friends, the Greek families. Thence we travelled by the French line of railway across the sandy desert coast to the left bank of the Nile. The engines, carriages, stations, and all connected with this railway compared unfavourably with the British Ramleh line ; not only in the matter of cleanliness, but in punctuality and civility. Here was apparent in every branch a wanton carelessness due to a faulty administration.

" Only a little less repulsive than at Damanhour," was my first remark as we approached the town of Rosetta.

" Did you expect any worse ? " inquired our new

friend, who was allowed to constitute himself our guide, he having been here once before.

"No, better," I replied, "because of its name, which is not susceptible or open to a double or sinister meaning."

"It is not half bad," interposed Nova. "The fact is, father has lost interest in the country; the weather, too, is dull; and mother feeling so much better, they long to get away."

"Excepting for the benefit Mrs. Glenn has received, I think," said Martha, "we have not gained much in exchange for our trouble."

"We shall all be better pleased to change coasts and stop for a few weeks in Italy, on our way home," said my wife emphatically.

At this Nova suddenly woke up with an alarmed look, and was about to give expression to her dissent; but I checked her with a reproving glance, which I hoped the young man did not see.

The terminus being within sight, we prepared our things, and in a few minutes passed out of the station yard, where we engaged a tawny youth as porter for our valise, which contained provisions for a repast, with the exception of bread and wine. Then we sauntered towards the best hotel, and found it tolerably clean but empty of guests. The proprietor, who lived across the road, was fetched; and with him we arranged for the use of a dining-room upstairs, overlooking a lovely garden, and a supply of good Italian wine, together with unleavened bread and every accessory needful to the enjoyment of a capital cold luncheon.

An hour later we left our wraps and traps at the hotel and strolled out, followed by the porter or backsheeshcadger, passing through some very dismal,

uninteresting streets. At the door of a noisy factory our satellite sprang forward, and, entering by himself, first announced us to the foreman in charge of the rice mills. The ladies declined to enter, but urged the gentlemen to do so if they pleased. I went alone. There was nothing interesting or remarkable to see or hear except rumbling heavy machinery, dust and grain. The man's style reminded me of the cotton-mill director at Damanhour; and, like him, he understood my French. It naturally occurred to me to ask him whether he had ever heard of or seen Ali Ben Zara, whose characteristics I described. To my agreeable surprise he answered in the affirmative. The officer in question, he said, was frequently in the company of Arabi Pacha about the time of the battle of Tell-el-Kebir, after which date the disguised "Captain" disappeared. He must have been killed, it was thought.

I got no farther than this. Such news was becoming monotonous. How did the Captain die? Where did he habitually reside? How did he look? To these questions the man before me could give no answers. "It was so long ago," etc. Bah! I was disgusted with the paltry item of intelligence, and would, if I could, have thrown it back to him to keep until his memory had improved.

Upon rejoining my people I found that while I was absent they had been prevailed upon to enter a native home close by. It was that of a local State functionary. There the ladies found means to converse with the several wives, who seemed to be fairly happy. Our German friend had been to hire a boat. We all now walked to the ferry station, near to which some half-dozen nude, swarthy fellows were taking an *al-fresco* bath. I reserved my news,

doubtful of the effect it might produce at that particular moment. Then, we entered our flat-bottomed craft equipped with a pilot and a couple of oarsmen, and were rowed a mile or so down the magnificent stream, keeping close in shore the whole way, until we alighted at the foot of a hill, near to which the famous Rosetta Stone was unearthed a hundred years before. We climbed to the top of the hill and saw there, amid drifted sand-heaps, a few spiked guns and traces of considerable ancient architecture which had been utilised as fortifications in expectation of the British advance. The Egyptians, however, were not attacked at that spot.

No doubt existed in my mind that Captain Klek had had a hand in that work. I thought it a reasonable assumption, too, and warranted by his silence, that he must have received the report of Martha's death, and, concluding that we had become acquainted with all the painful facts that instigated her desperate action, he had resolutely abstained from a compromising correspondence. On the other hand, it might have been impossible for him to send us a letter or a telegram without betraying his true nationality and running the risk of assassination.

One recalls to mind the terrible dangers incurred by the renowned Captain Richard Burton when he visited Mecca disguised as an Arab; how, upon his arrival at Damascus, he was upon the verge of being detected at the British Consulate, when his quick wits forestalled the recognition of his countrymen, and he handed in a slip of paper thus inscribed :

“ For God's sake, speak to me only in Arabic !—
DICK BURTON.”

The air was balmy and soft, like the Nile water we had dipped our hands into coming along. The

sun struck long slant shadows athwart the ruins of Khorsid Pacha's fortifications three-quarters of a century old, but now nearly all submerged in sand. One felt it, weighed and trickled it through the fingers. A dampness remained and a strong aroma of the desert.

We sat around a depression—formed by the sinking of a cannon, perhaps. A pensive if not contented feeling peculiar to the climate of the Delta prevailed. Only youthful folk can be gay there, and that not for long. To many invalids this languor is one of delicious relief. To Nova and our new acquaintance it appeared to prompt curiosity and research—more for purposes of distraction than real study. They peered under half-buried arches, and poked sticks into corners that might possibly have sheltered antediluvian toads. And so we let them wander. This afforded me the opportunity to broach our most interesting topic. I said :

“ You haven't asked me what I did at the rice mills.”

“ Oh, pray accept apologies and tell us, Mr. Glenn.”

“ I expect it was too noisy to speak or hear anything,” added Lucy.

“ It was a dreadful din,” I replied, “ yet I felt I was in the precincts of discovery.”

At this we all sat up straight, and I related the meagre traces of the foreman's recollections—concluding with my conviction that sources of further information existed elsewhere about Rosetta, beneath the surface.

“ Oh, for a divining-rod to guide us where to dig,” exclaimed Martha.

My wife suggested advertising a reward for relics or a clue. Upon which we began a descriptive enumeration of various "antiquities" we had purchased and subsequently found to be fictitious. I ventured :

"The supply of relics—like the demand—must be perennial; but they are all false: genuine ones are extremely rare—justifying a fresh rendering of a proverb that has grown stale, 'There is nothing *old* under the sun—in Egypt.' So it seems."

At that moment the voice of Nova returning sounded wonderfully *à propos*, as she was quoting from "The Psalm of Life"—"And things are not what they seem."

And thereupon her German companion followed suit as he crunched the golden grain beneath a heavy tread and responded with, "Footprints in the sands of time."

CHAPTER XXXII

RELICS

THE hotel-keeper was standing in the room while we were discussing my meagre gleanings and taking tea. The thought of asking him the old, old crucial question had not, till then, entered my mind, and I was made to look rather foolish when he said, in French, with apologies for the intrusion :

“ Pardon. If you seek information about the Capitaine Otto Klek, this will, I think, be of service to you.”

Whereupon he took from a side cupboard shelf and laid upon the table a paper parcel tied with string, which I at once seized and undid.

Martha leaned forward, her eyes flashing as her colour changed and tears welled up. Nova, unable to repress the scream, ejaculated a long “ Oh ! ” like a peacock’s cry of distress ; while Lucy started to her feet as if shocked by an apparition. Then, with all our heads put together, we stared at the unexpected discovery of some twenty letters in the handwriting of Martha, who had already taken possession of the *trouvaille*.

With a trembling hand she set to work spreading the letters out over the table, no one else venturing to interpose, even with a word, while she scanned the precious documents in search of notes or endorsements in the Captain’s own handwriting. We

remarked the absence of envelopes, and that the letters, though flattened, retained their original creases.

I broke the silence by asking the proprietor :

“ Have you any more relics of this gentleman ? I will pay you for them liberally,” said I ; “ you can make your own price.”

He bowed, shook his head, and said “ No.” But it was with a truly French air that caused me to suspect his veracity.

“ Did you know him ? ” I continued. “ Sit down and tell us, I pray you.”

But he persisted in standing up while relating his reminiscences. They were to the effect that he was quite aware at the time that Ali Ben Zara was only an assumed name of the Captain, who spoke several dialects perfectly and looked every inch a real Mussulman. His skin was dark—all but one spot on his forehead, where an old wound had been badly healed. It was during the month succeeding the massacre at Alexandria (which occurred on the 11th June, 1882) that Ali Ben Zara came frequently to Rosetta to superintend the fortifications. He lived at this same hotel, and was undoubtedly clever. But, unhappily, he sickened and died of fever.

These few papers were all that remained of his souvenirs.

“ I regret it much,” he added. There was no need to tell how much greater our regret was ; pitiful sighs spoke the fact.

I put down four Egyptian sovereigns, saying, “ I suppose we may have the packet of letters ? ”

“ With much pleasure,” he replied, and picked up the coins. Then, as we were preparing to leave, he said :

“ There is just time for you to catch the train; but I hope to see you again. *Au revoir !* ”

With that he left us abruptly and ran out of the house.

On the platform, where all was in confusion—passengers’ boxes, baskets, bundles, and fishing-nets—the steam escaping at high pressure from the engine necessitating loud shoutings and vociferations indescribable, I was met again by the hotel-keeper, who seized my hand and put a tiny hard parcel into it as he spoke impressively close to my ear :

“ This is another souvenir of your friend. He died with it inside his mouth, and it was not found for years after, when his body, which was buried at the corner of our street, had to be disturbed during the rebuilding of my house. *Adieu ! Bon voyage !* ”

He relinquished my hand and we parted.

In the presence of four witnesses, although it was growing dark and there was no light in our carriage, I opened my hand cautiously, and, after unfolding the wrapping-papers, three voices exclaimed simultaneously—“ Martha’s brooch ! ”

How smoothly the train sped along that night ! How interesting its stoppages every now and again to take up fishermen with their hauls, bargaining still with the market agent-buyer who had gone down from the town to try and prevent them coming up and spoiling profits by their competition ! How much more comfortable we all felt in the English-managed Ramleh-Alexandria train which we were, luckily, just in time to catch ! Anon, how merrily the landau—*voiture de place*—rattled, drawn by a pair of sleek horses and driven by a *cocher* in

white ! A civil cabby and only fivepence to pay for the course of half-a-mile !

Again, how happy Nova seemed with Herr —— !

Stop ! I must refrain from introducing fresh romance. The truth is that we three elders felt very sad, and sat in constrained silence ; the enjoyment belonged to the younger members of our party, one of whom was unacquainted with our affairs sufficiently to appreciate the effect of what had transpired at Rosetta.

No sooner had we entered the hotel than Martha retired to her room, refusing all nourishment. As for my wife and me, it was with great difficulty, if not real pain, that we could bear to remain in the *salon* and support the tedium of after-dinner conversation ; but we did it for the sake of others.

Lucy saw Martha again that night, and they planned a second visit to Rosetta for the next day. Nova, it was thought, would find plenty to occupy herself with, as, although we were going to leave Egypt in two days, there was shopping to do and a little packing.

I engaged a special courier this time, we being determined to spare neither pains nor expense in searching for ampler details concerning the last actions of our beloved friend and relation. He was a very intelligent man of fifty, this courier, until recently in the service of Gaze's firm, and reputed a capable linguist.

So we got safely to Rosetta once again ; and I, feeling quite confident, left the ladies in the care of the interpreter to perambulate the little town, more particularly the bazaar, everywhere seeking and questioning persons who might be thought likely to

possess some clue—stretching like a wireless telegraphy over the past decade—while I myself called on the proprietor of the hotel, at which we purposed to reassemble an hour or so later.

I found my man in good humour, but quite astonished to see me again. He was taken aback and refused point-blank when I offered to reward him for the brooch, protesting that he was perfectly satisfied.

“But I am not,” I replied; and taking him by the arm in a friendly way, begged him to give me half-an-hour quite privately. When the door was fastened and we were seated, I said :

“I want to hear all—everything you can recollect—about Ali Ben Zara, especially how he died. Your mind must be refreshed since yesterday.”

“I will tell you,” he began. “He was a very active man and kind to everybody but himself. Once he said to me in confidence, ‘I am not fit to live.’”

“Did he have a doctor?” I asked.

“No, he himself was one—the only doctor to hundreds of poor natives who suffered from the fever and might have died but for his skill. Each morning, after his military duties, he would give medicines to those who stood waiting around the house; then he would go and see others whom he had had arranged in a large shed. There were no ambulances or hospitals for treating the wounded soldiers, and many of them found their way across the desert to Rosetta. Ali Ben Zara was the best surgeon, and saved many limbs and lives too. They are an ungrateful lot; not one of them thinks of him now.”

“How long was he ill?”

“Only two days. I was *garçon* here, and took him food, which he was too ill to eat or to drink.

When he was dying I offered to write for him to his people. But he said he had none; and then it was that he made a confession."

"What—to a priest?"

"No—to me. He said: 'I am not fit to live, for I have killed my only love—my hope. She was the most perfect woman I ever knew. We married just before I came away from Europe.' I asked him how he killed her. He answered: 'With a false declaration—a lie! the consequences of which were irreparable. The discovery of my deception drove her mad, and she committed suicide.'"

Here I gave a sinking sigh.

"Take a little brandy," he said. "I have finished—*c'est triste, voilà tout*."

"Have you perused those letters?" I inquired.

"No, I never had any wish to do so," he replied. "Moreover, they are written in English, which I do not understand."

Having now exhausted my quest, it remained only for me to return thanks; which I did, clasping his hand and telling him that he was the author of a melancholy satisfaction for which I had craved.

My people's efforts had been fruitless. There was just time for me to give them a summary of what I had been told, while the courier went and hurried the preparations for our dinner. In the afternoon leisure was found for a little walk and contemplation of the scene of the last moments of one who, while futilely strengthening Fort Julien against a British force that never went that way, had by his skill and kindness fortified the lives of many of the inhabitants of this benighted place against a worse enemy—namely, premature death by lingering disease. Himself he could not save.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FATAL IMPRUDENCE

THE unfortunate P. & O. boat, the *Bokhara*,¹ sailed from Alexandria on her last trip to Naples, carrying a very light cargo. This was true likewise of our hearts, for they had just been relieved of a great weight. There was a favourable breeze during the whole passage. The number of passengers was less than that of the crew. Sea-sickness never came on board; or if it had embarked, it was only as a stowaway. No places were vacant at table. The captain—as affable a one as I ever met or wished to speak to—paced the deck with us in turns, and promised that we should be in the Bay of Naples on the third night. He was enabled to keep his promise faithfully, although we could not disembark before the morning. The usual seaport formalities were performed at daybreak, after which we were free to engage any of the small craft that was to be seen plying for hire. But the passengers were not driven by hunger to get ashore as quickly as possible; on the contrary, we all sat and enjoyed a plentiful meal, and afterwards shook hands with the commander at parting.

While being rowed across to the customs-house—the oars beating time to a couple of serenaders who

¹ She shortly after this floundered in the China Seas, all souls perishing.

sat in the bow twanging guitars and singing to the unfading memory of "Sancta Lucia"—I remarked a distinct change in Martha, whose countenance wore a depressive cast, familiar enough to us at one time, but which had happily been dispelled seven years ago. My wife took the cue from me, and urged her to wrap up, saying :

"We are coming away from a warmer climate, you know."

"I do not feel it," Martha replied. "To me everything wears a more comfortable aspect upon returning to Europe; while the very thought of Egypt is chilling. How dreary are its sands; its salt lakes, how arid! its landscapes, how monotonous! its people, how uninteresting if not sordid and degraded! What desolation prevails, not only in their colossal ruins, but in their homes, particularly in the outskirts of their populous centres. Think of Damanhour and its surroundings. Who that has a relation or friend in the land of the Pharaohs but would wish them well out of it, or on their way to some promised land, to get to which were worth crossing a Red Sea! Let us bring away as many souvenirs, antiquities, curiosities—genuine ones—as we can; but stay there—no, not for me!"

She smiled languidly and shook her head.

"What do you say to that, Nova?" her mother inquired.

But that young person, not being of a like mind, preferred to reserve her opinion, excusing herself by intimating that the strains of un-intermitting melody anent "Sancta Lucia" (which had entered upon its sixth verse) had prevented her hearing all that Martha was saying.

But for the fact of our boat bumping against the

quay and putting a stop to all other thoughts but those of landing ourselves safely and our luggage free of inordinate duties, Nova's ruse would have been handled roughly. For we witnessed what occurred between herself and Herr —— at the parting on the quay at Alexandria, and it seemed to tell in favour of a residence in Egypt—at least for some people.

It was our intention to return through Italy and France, and to make short rests at Naples, Rome, Florence, Turin, and Paris, allowing about a week to each place. The itinerary was settled for us by our late courier. But, alas !

“The best-laid schemes of mice and men
Gang aft agley.”

From the windows of the Hôtel Bristol we saw, for the first time that winter, a white frost on the tops of things ; the tram-cars, to wit, as they threaded their way over the Corso Vittorio Emanuele. But the day was very fine, as was the one that followed when we began our series of excursions, or trips, according to the programme. These embraced Mount Vesuvius, the museum, cathedral, aquarium, royal palace, and churches many ; besides sundry other objects and places to be found between (and including also) Pompeii and Pozzuoli. The last-named we took first ; and, Baedeker in hand, pursued the well-worn routine, and paid the inevitable fees and penalties.

Of the latter, one was destined to be enacted of which we had never dreamed, or we should have restrained and curtailed our curiosity and greed for sightseeing.

It was at the Baths of Neri, as the subterranean

galleries are called, at the end of which, after forcing one's self along some fifty yards of narrow passages, the low roof necessitates continual stooping while hot sulphurous fumes meet and nearly suffocate one. Upon reaching a hole scarcely discernible by the light of the naked candles we carried, a youth was seen kneeling. He offered to demonstrate the existence of a boiling spring below by lowering a cord to the end of which an egg was attached. After a few moments he raised the egg, and cracked its shell to prove that it was hard boiled. We carried it away with us as a souvenir, leaving behind, in the hand of the demonstrator, twice the weight of the egg and ten times its value in bronze money, out of sheer commiseration for the lad's poverty. As I withdrew the coins from my pocket my moistened hand indicated a state of perspiration positively alarming, because I felt convicted of crass stupidity, ignorance almost culpable, for having allowed—nay, invited—my people to enter this infernal cave with me. I looked as white as a ghost, I was told by persons who had never seen one. Instead of returning the compliment, as I might have done with justice, I called their attention to their violent perspiration and bade them remain inside, away from the aperture, while I went to the carriage and fetched them all the wraps I could muster, even to the coachman's knee-rug. I could not conceal my great anxiety, which continued unabated during the rest of the day, spoiling my enjoyment of the native dances, the ascent of Solfatara, etc. Ere we regained our hotel, night fell.

On the morrow, no one being absent from the breakfast-table, it was assumed that no ill effects

had supervened my injudiciousness at the Bagni di Neri, and so we betook ourselves to Pompeii by carriage and pair.

Excavations were then being made, objects of interest turning up every hour under the spade of the labourer, who was superintended by an expert who smoked his long pipe with delightful equanimity while amateurs grew enthusiastic.

It were futile to attempt a description of all we saw. To quote the highest authority, "No other place in the world combines within the same compass so much natural beauty with so many objects of interest to the antiquary, the historian, and the geologist as the Bay of Naples" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th ed.).

Thus daily without cessation, and rapidly in order to accomplish all that we had planned within the prescribed limit of time, we trolled about merrily, absorbing enough art and science, superstition, wonderment, and food for laughter to last (with the help of the photographs we bought at less than half the price we should have paid for them in London) all through the next winter, which we purposed spending at our "ain firesides."

Vesuvius we saw every night from the windows of our bedrooms; but we were unable to make the ascent, being prevented not only by a change in the weather, but also through indisposition. Martha had caught a slight cold. Lucy and I went about alone shopping and inspecting artists' studies, one of which contained a very clever piece of sculpture in black and white marble that was being finished for the Chicago Exhibition; subject—A boy in the grip of an octopus.

The details of the next few days—the last we spent in Naples—are not recorded in my memory, whose workings were thrown out of gear by the preponderating weight of two or three facts of pre-eminent import to each of us. All I recollect is that rain fell in torrents, and that Martha's cold refused to yield to Nova's nursing. We were advised to get to Rome as quickly as possible—away from the sea air. The railway journey was irksome, and we were glad to arrive at a comfortable *pension* in the Via Sistina.

The following morning I was the only one of our party at the breakfast-table; the ladies were served with coffee in their own rooms. Martha was unable to rise.

The meal over, the thermometer became the object of attention. Standing about the corridor and chatting were several who, like me, looked weary, undecided, for the sky was overcast. I inquired at the bureau for the address of the best doctor, and was copying it into my note-book when I was informed by a visitor that there were several cases of influenza in the house. I ran up-stairs to consult Lucy. She was terribly alarmed. But we decided not to move; at any rate, to have a doctor in first.

Who that has passed through the ordeal (and who has not?) of suspense, waiting the advent of the medical man who is to pronounce an authoritative opinion in a new case of sudden illness—serious enough to threaten speedy death—can forget the promptings of conscience that come, together with remorseful accusations of previous neglect, to prepare us for the worst? Then we set about it in

real earnest and prepare; not the mind only, but the common requirements of a sick-chamber, such as a good wife or grandmother, at home, is expected always to have at finger's end. Emergencies like these are awkward to deal with in an hotel, particularly a foreign one. The best thing to do is to cause it to be known that there is no lack of money to pay for everything, including extra attentions; also to inspire the management with the prospect of your staying—and paying—during a long convalescence, rather than allow them to think that you will be only too glad to turn out. To pull a long face and behave parsimoniously is to invite the hotel people to wish for, if not to accelerate, a fatal termination, in order to justify an exorbitant claim for damages. The cases of those who travel, or spend the whole of their time sojourning in a succession of hotels—alone, unaccompanied by any relations or close friends—would appear to be worse than ours was.

“I am seventy-eight,” said an old gentleman to me that very day in Rome, “and have outlived all my relations. Having nobody left to care for me, I learnt to care for nobody. Now I have not a friend in the world; only a valet.”

As he helped him into his carriage, the valet looked as if he did not intend his master should make friends and thus prolong his life.

Cause and effect react upon each other. The cause of our wanderings was the desire to escape from suffering and to gratify a natural impulse; the effect was a resuscitation of past sorrow under the most unfavourable conditions. We had grievously blundered, returning too early from the mild,

equable temperature of the Delta. The short breezy voyage was taken too soon after the painful excitement at Rosetta; and, above all, by the imprudent venture into those frightful Bagni di Neri we had exposed ourselves to chills.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ADIEU

"*C'est la grippe*," said the French doctor, in response to our request that he would not hide the truth from us.

He saw Martha twice that day. Each time he looked serious, and said that we could do no more or better than we were doing for her.

In the evening the valetudinarian, who was an Englishman, asked me to play chess with him. But, upon my begging to be excused and explaining the reason, he spoke so sympathetically that I wondered he should have to complain of friendlessness. We drew our chairs closer, and I put a question, to which he replied by asking :

"What arrangement did you make ? "

"None," I rejoined. "We had no idea of such an eventuality. Do people ever arrange terms in advance, in view of their own demise ? "

"Why, yes, to be sure ! " he answered, with surprise at my innocence. "I always do. Business is business ; and it is a good thing for us all that such questions intervene at times like this, when sentiment and feeling overflow, threatening to overwhelm us. All causes that tend to straighten our backs are salutary."

"Quite true," I allowed ; "yet it is very distasteful. I flattered myself upon having retired from business."

"Ah! you did—did you?" he exclaimed, with a wide smile. "Anyhow, whether a man can or cannot retire from the business of life, we must all face the business of death. No retiring from that on this side of the screen."

"In this matter of extra attendance during this lady's illness, I have told them," I said, "I shall not grudge them their charges, provided they spare no pains. But I should certainly like to know the probable extent of their bill of costs in case of a fatal issue."

"You were wrong at first," the veteran insisted. "It is too late now. I always ask for the tariff before putting up at an hotel, and stipulate for a fixed amount of compensation if I should die there."

"And what is the average figure?" I inquired.

"That is hard to reckon," he replied, "because the circumstances differ widely. Put it down as equivalent to a hundred days' *pension*. In the large hotels of Paris or the Riviera it would average much higher."

"I think they are very foolish not to modify their claims, and mention on their tariffs how much it costs to die," I ventured. "A reasonably low rate might serve as an attraction, and it is manifestly the interest of most parties to prolong life."

The old man shook his head as he concluded:

"I am not so sure of that. The hotel-keepers are frequently victimised. To recoup for losses over bankrupts and swindlers, they are in the habit of making their honest customers pay smartly. That is a wrong principle. They might combine for mutual protection, and relieve the dead client's estate by insurance under a floating policy in one of the large companies."

A merely casual observer of our little party, hitherto, might have remarked the robust appearance of Martha and contrasted it with that of my wife. No one would have imagined her as she became, in a very short time, the assiduous nurse, closely watching and administering to every want and anticipating it, suggesting innumerable forms of relief, physical as well as mental, and tendering, in the softest accents, too gentle for utterance—the language of the hands, the eyes, and the heart—those consolations that are sweetest the nearer one approaches the end of life's journey.

From both the resignation of Martha and the affectionate devotion of my wife our daughter could, and did, derive an invaluable object-lesson that has served to make her the woman that she now is.

At the end of ten days—in which short period was compressed as many years of deep anxiety—the fell disease completed its ravaging course, and Martha Vernet (or Klek) had disappeared from this sphere of uncertainty.

When the crisis was reached and had turned for the worse, the patient herself was the least affected by the knowledge of the fact; of which it would have been cruel, if it had been possible, to keep her in ignorance. She spoke, in her lucid moments, of having forgiven those that had trespassed against her, and said that it embraced her own unnatural mother, to whom she wished us to try and find means of communicating the tidings of her child's death.

Martha bequeathed to me her budget of letters to Captain Klek, to make use of as I thought proper. The whole of her fortune she had willed to Nova, but with a charge to continue certain benevolent

works she had instituted in the district of Somers Town. To Lucy she gave, as the last token of her dying love, her old brooch and Madame Vernet's collection of miniatures; likewise Martha's own work, including the portrait of Captain Klek. These we prize. But Lucy values most the recollection of the last word that escaped the lips of our sweet governess:

“ Thanks ! ”

It was expressed with studied emphasis. One little word, yet worth a long life of toil and patience to merit—and to receive.

Passion and resentment had no place in Martha's heart. The former natural tendency had been cured and conquered by her superior will; the latter did not survive the cataleptic fit. Her resurrection had changed her views relating to the act of suicide, which she ever after construed as a crime against humanity and an affront to the Creator.

EXTRACTS FROM MARTHA'S LETTERS

London,
May, 1882.

“ MY DEAR HUSBAND,—

“ The strangest thing happened to me to-day. I was out walking with *toutou* in arms, and when passing Berwick Street I stopped to look at a pretty sight—namely, some young children dancing around an organ. They were of the poorest, or at any rate neglected, class; yet they danced astonishingly well.

“ I felt a curious sensation, and my feet moved involuntarily to the measure of their steps. Fortunately, at that moment the dog howled, so that I was obliged to quit the spot; otherwise I might have looked ridiculous.

“ My memory seemed, all at once, to have recovered a long unused channel, and I pictured myself as a child of three or four years dancing to the same tunes and in that identical place. The very stones of the pavement and all the surroundings became familiar to me, and I concluded that it must have been the locality of my home before I was introduced to that of Madame Vernet.

“ Extremes meet. Directly afterwards, while this peculiar impression was yet warm, I called on the solicitors, who then told me the amount of our fortune; it is ten thousand pounds! So much more than we expected—eh? You will now be

able to give up trading. Are you not happy to read it?

"I shall ascertain to-morrow when the next steamer leaves Alexandria for Europe. . . ."

"OTTO, dearest,—

"My curiosity prompting, I went again yesterday to the place where the children danced around an organ, and by slow degrees my former convictions were deepened. For I pushed inquiries so diligently that I found out the actual person, a baby-farmer (laughter) who once had charge of me!

"The mendacity and cupidity of such low people are proverbial, therefore I shall have to be very careful. I almost wish I had not troubled her.

"But the most astonishing impudence is her assertion that my proper, original name was *Klek*! Did you know of any of your relations or namesakes—*homonymes*, as the French call them—living in England? The name is quite uncommon. I suspect the woman has got to know my present name from the address on your letters, which either the postman or a tradesman may have given her; and perhaps the 'Madame' does not convey to her mind the fact that I am married. And so, like a common fortune-teller, she makes capital of the stolen information. We shall see. I have another appointment with her, when she has undertaken to produce written proof.

"I do not mention this adventure to the Glenns, although there is nothing to be ashamed of that I can see. I want your advice.

"P.S.—I am always careful to direct my letters to you at the Poste Restante Française, Alexandrie."

"OTTO, my own dear,—

"I am distracted—what with the serious aspect of affairs in Egypt, the furnishing of our home (which only lacks your presence to make complete. Oh! I wish you were here), and the disclosures resulting from my efforts to trace my parentage. The latter subject, you will think with me, is most important.

"The bliss of ignorance is denied to people who, like Saul and like me, have recourse to witches. Moreover, since I have kept the secret from my best friends, it is exceedingly painful to be obliged to reject their affectionate overtures.

"The woman I suspected and challenged has given me her proof. That is to say, she allows me to read and copy a letter from my own mother (?). It is dated 'June 4, '65,' and says:

"DEAR MRS. BROWN,—

"In answer to your letter, you may dispose of the child as you propose, on condition that my name is not divulged. I will not stand in the way.

"Yours truly,

"JANE KLEK."

(Here is a tracing of the actual signature.)

"Mrs. Brown tells me that previous to the above letter she had called on my mother (who was at that date employed as assistant to her aged parents, the keepers of a lodging-house in Jermyn Street), and received from her payments for my keep; but that when these were in arrears she accepted, in place of money, a ring mounted with an amethyst and set with brilliants. That was the last time Mrs. Brown received anything for my support. The ring, after being converted into a brooch, was eventually sold to a foreign lady for ten pounds, and I was given in!

That brooch, as you know, is lost. But the great question now is : Can my mother be found ? ”

“ MY DEAR HUSBAND,

“ No news from you ! Not a line or a single word since I wrote you more than a month ago, on this most important subject. Why do you not answer ? When will you be back here in London ? Possibly, you are already on the way. If so, I wonder you did not telegraph me before starting, or at any stopping-place *en route*.

“ That woman, Mrs. Brown, not being able to trace my mother, I engaged a private detective, who, up to now, has likewise failed. But—and here my aching heart beats, threatening to stop my pen—he has obtained a certificate from Somerset House of the marriage, in 1861, of Jane Webb with one Otto Klek, an Austrian subject !!! Also a birth certificate of their female child registered ten months later !!! So that I am not yet of age ; and, whether I find my mother or fail in my search, it is plain that while you live I am not an orphan !!

“ This discovery is driving me mad. For——

“ Mrs. Glenn had her first ‘ At Home ’ to-day. I was constrained to put in an appearance for a short time. There were savants among the invited. Two or three of them were discussing Goethe and the marriage question, and I gathered their opinions, viz. : that the fashionable *mariage de convenance* was contrary to nature ; while, on the other hand, a truly happy union was frequently rendered impossible, or frustrated, by social difficulties, or prohibited by the decrees of the Church. Their ideal marriage, as they described it, was independent of conventionalities and above every law but that

of 'Elective Affinity'; as was the attachment between our first parents.

"One of the gentlemen was explaining to another—a much younger man—the meaning of the term, saying that it was borrowed from physical scientists, and referred to the mutual attractiveness of certain metals when in solution. Applied metaphorically in dealing with the marriage problem, it represents a force stronger than, and superior to, mere love; implying a perfect accord and sympathy in everything pertaining to the intellectual faculties. Where a case of elective affinity is known to exist, conventionalism should be disregarded. If the penal statutes threaten restraint, we must agitate for a change in the law; pending which we can change our native land for another where there is greater liberty to obey the dictates of an improved nature.

" 'We are forming an association with this object,' said the elder of the gentlemen. 'Will you join?' he asked. 'We hope to become affiliated to the *Cercles des Divorcées* that are now being promoted on the Continent.'

"I came away disgusted with this absurd project, which would condone incest, and with a confusion of ideas. But they were soon dispersed by the ponderous realities and facts I had recently unearthed.

"I set these out in black and white before me, side by side with your two portraits which have, up to now, lain close to my heart. In one I behold my Captain, whose valiant exploits merit my admiration, inspire me with pride, and arouse the spirit of emulation. Those honourable decorations on your breast and the ribbon in your button-hole were never, perhaps, more worthily borne. How I once longed

to accompany you in the pursuit of your eminently dangerous, yet chivalrous, calling ! In the other picture—which was taken at St. Barnabé—I see my invalided lover, his placid countenance denoting, not exhaustion, but rest, repose. His eyes are directed towards an object—which was myself—as if they looked to and counted upon that person to aid in the accomplishment of their owner's objects in life. How painfully well I recollect the sensation of reciprocity. Now all is changed by the discovery of a calamity worse than death ; a fault, a lie !

“So many good qualities, and only one blemish ! Who, or what that is human, is without a flaw ? Where shall we find perfection ? The most valuable and beautiful objects in the world have their drawbacks and defects, which it is our duty to try and repair. But the barrier which prevents our union can only be removed in that place beyond—should we ever reach it—where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Alas ! could I credit you with the benevolent thought that, as your previous marriage in London was a hastily concocted affair (only a youthful imprudence), and that your wife would most probably be dead, or remarried by now, there was less harm in suppressing the real facts than there would be in destroying my confidence and depriving us both of a life of happy conjugal companionship—I should be approving the jesuitical method of attempting to achieve a hypothetical temporary advantage by prostituting the highest principles. Such a motive you may have deemed good and sufficient excuse for violating the truth and breaking your solemn vow, as one who, to suit his own purpose, would divert the way-marks on a public road, or dare to remove the danger signals on a rail-

way line. But I abhor the lie as essentially a selfish subterfuge, repugnant to a due sense of honour and incompatible with the standard of morality I have been educated to and cannot forsake. Therefore the notion of a union between us is precluded, even on the low ground of elective affinity.

"I have laboured with agony, yet in vain, to find adequate excuses for you. That you may not have known the fact of your child's birth, I allow; but, inasmuch as you saw me wearing the brooch that was made of your own ring, you ought to have instituted the fullest inquiries into the possibilities. Whichever way I twist the arguments and torture my mind, the deduction is the same: the affinity that subsists between us two is not of the elective sort. Still, I feel loth to address you as my father, because the title carries with it a sense of mutual responsibility and respect which is decidedly lacking. . . .

"To-morrow I shall disclose my trouble to Mrs. Glenn. It was not my intention to do so before you had replied to my former letters. Three successive mails have arrived without a letter from you. God grant that no serious mishap has overtaken you. Under less urgent circumstances I should have waited longer yet, in the expectation that the delay would be explained if not justified. The case is different now; I must have advice in respect of my legal position. . . ."

Midnight.

"An hour ago I opened my door to Mrs. Cawley, the temporary cook. She is a big, middle-aged, plain woman—a horrid creature, I regret to say; not only vulgar, but coarse and intemperate. She is a person without moral principles. Yet I am bound

to believe what she says about you. I will describe our interview :

“ ‘ I heard them call you Madame Klek to-night. Is that your rightful name ? ’

“ ‘ Yes, it is—Madame Otto Klek.’

“ Seizing me by the arm and regarding me intently, she continued :

“ ‘ And your husband is an Austrian—is he not ? ’

“ ‘ He was.’

“ ‘ And so was mine ; and of the same name too ! When I was as young as you are my parents kept a boarding-house in Jermyn Street. He came to lodge with us for a few months—taking lessons in English of a professor in the neighbourhood. Shortly after we were married he deserted me and went abroad. . . . I won’t say any more now, dear ; I see you are not well ; but I will look in again tomorrow.’

“ She was right—I was ready to faint. Now, however, I am recovered and determined to put an end to my life.

“ Oh, Otto ! my heart’s idol, I cannot give you up and continue to live.

* * * * *

“ Never since Eve was woman’s curiosity so bitterly requited. Upon discovering an unworthy father I lose the husband I adored ; and, after seventeen years’ orphanhood, I am confronted by a mother whom I loathe. And yet this apparition is to cost me the half of my legacy—ten thousand pounds ! Those seventeen years were passed in comparative innocence and peace.

“ I stand at the door which opens into eternity, and grasp the handle with the power that God has given me. He endowed me with a free will—the

right of private judgment. I now judge that it were better to close the term of a happy life than to prolong it into endless misery. If my nerves and muscles do not refuse to obey the discretion of my mind, it will be plain evidence of normal physical strength, sanity.

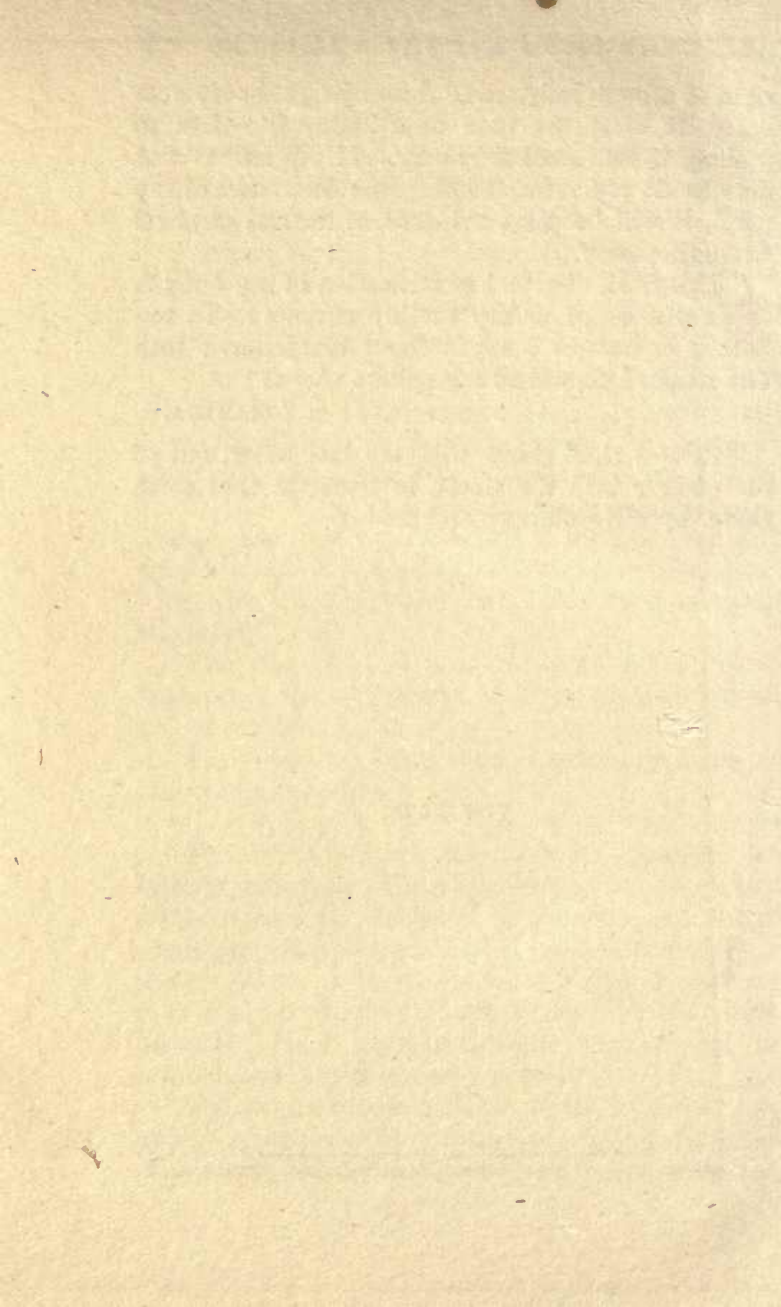
“ This final, effectual mortification of my body is on your account, O my earthly parents ! To my Father in heaven I say without blasphemy : Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Amen !

“ MARTHA.

“ P.S.—I shall throw this, my last letter, out of the window into the street, in the hope that some passer-by will pick it up and post it.

“ M. K.”

THE END



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